STRANGER AND GUEST.

BY

RVIN R. VINCENT.

BR
125
V44
1879
GTU
Storage

BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA

FROM THE LIBRARY OF

HENRY WHITNEY BELLOWS

1814-1882

MINISTER OF ALL SOULS' CHURCH, NEW YORK CITY,
1839-1882

✠

By MARVIN R. VINCENT, D.D.

The Law of Sowing and Reaping. 18mo, Paper Cover, 10 cents.

Christ at the Door. 18mo, Paper Cover, 10 cents.

What is it to Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? (*Seventh Thousand.*) 18mo, Paper Cover, 10 cents, or 32mo, without Cover, 4 cents.

Why Should I Join the Church? 18mo, Paper Cover, 10 cents.

Not Discerning the Lord's Body. 18mo, Paper Cover, 10 cents.

The Two Prodigals. 18mo, Paper Cover, 20 cents.
" " 18mo, Cloth " 40 "

"A most excellent and pointed exposition of the Pearl of Parables."

STRANGER AND GUEST.

CONTAINING

The Law of Sowing and Reaping. Christ at the Door, What is it to Believe, etc., Why Should I Join the Church? Not Discerning the Lord's Body. 18mo, Cloth, 75 cents.

ANSON D. F. RANDOLPH & COMPANY,
900 Broadway, Cor. 20th St., New York.

Sent by mail, free of expense, on receipt of the price. Fractional amounts can be remitted in postage-stamps.

✠

STRANGER AND GUEST.

MARVIN R. VINCENT, D.D.,

NEW YORK.

Property of

CBSK

Please return to

Graduate Theological

Union Library

NEW YORK:

ANSON D. F. RANDOLPH & CO.,

900 BROADWAY, COR. 20th STREET.

BR
125
V44
1879

COPYRIGHT, 1879, BY
ANSON D. F. RANDOLPH & COMPANY.

EDWARD O. JENKINS' PRINT,
20 NORTH WILLIAM STREET, N. Y.

✠

The first and third chapters of this little volume have already appeared in separate form. These, with the three chapters here added, are intended to deal with successive stages of the spiritual life from the world to the Lord's table. Hence the title, "Stranger and Guest." The first chapter, "The Law of Sowing and Reaping," treats of the inevitable tendencies of character. The second, "Christ at the Door," embodies Christ's appeal to one who is "Sowing to the flesh." The third, "What is it to Believe on the Lord Jesus?" tries to answer the great question of the seeker of salvation. The fourth, "Why Should I Join the Church?" urges upon the new convert the claim of the Church as the true medium of Christian profession; while the fifth, "Not Discerning the Lord's Body," endeavors to explain the elements of a true discernment of Christ in the holy Sacrament, and to relieve sincere believers of the tormenting doubt which too often besets the approach to the Lord's table.

M. R. V.

✠

Isa '15 Fellows

9770

✠

CONTENTS.

I. THE LAW OF SOWING AND REAPING.

II. CHRIST AT THE DOOR.

III. WHAT IS IT TO BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

IV. WHY SHOULD I JOIN THE CHURCH?

V. NOT DISCERNING THE LORD'S BODY.

✠

THE LAW OF SOWING AND REAPING.

COPYRIGHT, 1877, BY

ANSON D. F. RANDOLPH & COMPANY.

Gal. vi. 7, 8 : "*Be not deceived: God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*

"*For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.*"

THE LAW OF

SOWING AND REAPING.

THESE solemn words are appended to an exhortation to liberality toward the teachers of the Gospel. The Galatians had been urged, as we learn from the first Epistle to the Corinthians, to contribute, with the other Churches, to the relief of the famine-stricken Christians of Judaea; but apparently the greed and stinginess for which, as a nation, they were celebrated, had either prevented a response, or had made it a very niggardly one. It is this characteristic which appears to cause Paul to speak with so much solemnity: "Do not indulge your selfishness and avarice. Do not deceive yourselves into the belief that you can cheat God by fair professions. You can not mock *Him*. According as you sow,

you will reap: corruption as the fruit of selfishness, eternal life as the fruit of a loving and generous service of God."

These words have, of course, an application far beyond this special case. They state a caution which implies a danger common to *all* men, and a principle of vital importance and of universal bearing.

Let us look first at the *caution:* "Be not deceived, God is not mocked;" that is, be not deceived into thinking that you can mock God. Some one will be likely to say: "What sane man, who believes in a God at all, is liable to be deceived into a belief so monstrous as that God can be mocked?" And yet, Scripture never utters a needless warning. Let us be quite sure that we understand what the word means. It carries first the idea of an *open, gross* display of contempt. Literally, it means to turn up the nose at. Then it gets the subtler meaning of contradicting respectful words by a contemptuous gesture or look. In this sense the Apostle would say to the Galatians:

"Do not deceive yourselves into thinking that you can impose upon God with any mere formal demonstrations of respect, when your disobedience and selfishness show that you hold Him in no *real* reverence."

But we may carry the idea farther still. Contempt for God may be shown in ascribing to Him principles and acts unworthy of His character. You understand how that works among men. Suppose a man enters the counting-room of one of our old merchants, one whose integrity is beyond suspicion, and says to him: "I have just found a way by which a hundred thousand dollars can be made out of the Government. Nobody but ourselves need be any the wiser, and if you choose to go into the matter with me, you shall have half the profits." You can hardly conceive of a grosser insult to a high-minded man; and the insult, as you very plainly see, would lie in the thief's assuming a common ground for the merchant and himself: in his taking it for granted

that the merchant was as great a scoundrel as himself. Can a man mock *God* in that way? Look at the 50th Psalm, where God is addressing a wicked man: "When thou sawest a thief then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers. Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. These things hast thou done, and I kept silence. *Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.*" Men may mock God by assuming that He is governed by their false standards of the judgment of conduct; that He will treat this or that sin as a trifle because *they* regard it as such; that He will suspend, in the moral and spiritual realm, well-established laws which govern His action in other and lower realms, so that they may sow lust, and rebellion, and self-indulgence, and dishonesty, and yet reap power, and purity, and happiness, or, at the worst, *immunity* from the legitimate consequences of such things.

Are men, then, in any real danger of fall-

ing into this error? Beyond a doubt. The danger is not a matter of speculation, but of hard fact, of visible experience, and of written record.

For instance, it is quite plain that men easily bring themselves to believe that God approves what they themselves desire or love. Whether the thing is the product of their *brain*, or the expression of their *conscience*, or the idol of their *senses*, they crave the *Divine* sanction for the truth of their theories, or for the indulgence of their desires. Hence comes the fact that men have seriously and formally attempted to justify the grossest violations of human right, and the indulgence of the vilest passions by the words of the Bible. Hence the old sarcasm, that in the Bible every man seeks his own dogmas, and finds what he seeks.

There was that case of Saul and the Amalekites. God bade Saul go up against the Amalekites, and exterminate not only the people, but their flocks and herds. Saul went, but the cattle were so fine that it

seemed a pity to slay them, and the captive King Agag would make such a splendid addition to the sacrificial thanksgiving by his presence and humiliation, that he concluded to spare *him* also. And so God was disobeyed. And yet Saul wanted God himself to justify the disobedience. "Saul, thou hast disobeyed God's commandment." "Aye, but it was for the *Lord.* We wanted to make a splendid sacrifice." How quickly Samuel riddles the miserable pretext. Will God surrender the great principle of *obedience* for the flattery of a pompous sacrifice? Thou hast lost thy kingdom, Saul, by this mockery of God. "To *obey* is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

And is there one of us who has not been tempted in the same way? Is there one of us who has not found himself justifying some pet sin on this wise: "It is such a little matter. It comforts me so much. It would take so much out of my life if I had to surrender it. Surely, God will not deal

very severely with me for this." Ah, how often, when God says to us, "Get thee to the *mountain* lest thou be consumed," we pray, like Lot, to be allowed to stop at some little Zoar, short of the mountain, thinking only of its *littleness*, and forgetting that it is bound up with the common sin, and doomed to the common destruction of the plain.

And this, I repeat, is mockery of God. It insults God by assuming that there are special cases in which He will be false to His own character, and will compromise with evil: by treating Him as if His omniscience were blind to the inconsistency: by ascribing to the all-holy God, the easy, good-natured tolerance of an erring man; and by trying to commit Him to the practical *denial* of the truth that the issue of sin *must* be evil and *only* evil, that its wages is *death*.

To contradict this error is the object of the remainder of the text. The Apostle shows that the error reaches far beyond any individual act, and strikes at a great law of

God's administration. This law he illustrates first on its lower side, where it touches material things, and then carries up its application into the moral and spiritual life of men.

The law is *this:* Like produces like. The illustration, I repeat, begins with the lower side of the truth, where it touches the fields and the grain. *There* it is a generally accepted law. No man thinks of questioning it. What he sows he expects to reap; that and nothing else. If he should go to gather oats when he had sowed wheat, men would call him a lunatic. He does not expect grapes from thorns, nor figs from thistles. He may be a scoffer at Scripture, but *one* saying he believes with all his heart; that a good tree *can not* bring forth corrupt fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. The same law is recognized elsewhere than in agriculture. No business man expects that wealth and prosperity are going to follow idleness and extravagance. No scholar believes that the

most highly-endowed man is going to become a *learned* man through neglect of books and of study. What the text teaches, then, is simply this : that this law of like producing like is no more a law of agriculture than of morals and religion. It is just as true in the one sphere as in the other. The argument is direct from one to the other. If you do not expect to reap rye where you have planted oats, why should you hope to reap peace, happiness, a quiet conscience, Divine favor, heaven, from a selfish spirit, or from a sinful life? Why should you expect mistaken views of God, false applications of His laws, wrong-doing, or wrong thinking, to unfold into anything but disaster and shame? If you do not expect God to suspend the operation of His law in the one case, why expect it in the other?

The first thought upon which we come in this part of the text is, then, that *seed* means *fruit:* A seed enfolds a *life;* and life implies *development* according to its own law. Therefore, if you sow corrupt seed,

the evil does not come in getting *no* fruit; it comes in your *getting* fruit, and that *bad* fruit. If a farmer sows Canada thistles, the trouble is not that he does not get raspberries or melons, but that he *does* get thistles—*just what he sowed.*

Carry this fact up into the moral plane, and it is equally a fact there. Let a man, for example, sow to appetite. Let him, in other words, make the gratification of his palate the chief end in life. He generally gets what he sowed for. His palate *is* gratified. His mouth *is* satisfied with good things. Whatever harvest comes of eating and drinking, he reaps; but he has no reason to be surprised if, in the *harvest* days, his greatest pain and vexation should come through the very crop for which he sowed. *He* recognized the law that like produces like. He used the appropriate means to his end, and the law developed what he wanted, only he did not think how much more than he wanted the law might develop. He looked no farther than the pleasure of taste, the animal joy of

satiety: and the harvest of debased manhood, of palled appetites, of inability to enjoy the very pleasure on which he had concentrated his life—all this, which was in the seed he sowed, he did not count upon.

It is a very common sentiment that a season of dissipation is, in some sort, a young man's natural right before settling down to the sterner work of life. There is an easy tolerance conveyed in the phrase, to "sow one's wild oats." And youth is very often tempted to say: "God will deal leniently with us. An occasional lapse from virtue, or a revel now and then, will be lightly passed over in consideration of our youth, and it will be just as well, after we shall have settled down, and shall have exchanged our follies for the active work of manhood." *Will* it be just as well? No, no. That is mocking God to say so. That is denying the great law that moral action fructifies according to its own quality. That is assuming that God will suspend that law for youth's sake. Does He do anything of

the kind? On the contrary, it is upon *youth* that He urges this law with special emphasis, because youth is *seedtime.* Youth thinks of the harvest as at the *old man's* end of the line; whereas, it is at *his* end of the line, only wrapped up in the seed. "Whatsoever he *soweth*—THAT—THAT—THAT—shall he reap." Is God mocked? Is He going to tell a young man one moment to glorify Him in his body, as the temple of the Holy Ghost, and is He the next moment going to look complacently upon the defiled temple through which his swinish lusts have had free course? You tell me God forgives sin. So He does; but does *nature* forgive sin? She knows nothing whatever of forgiveness. No man can give a shock to his body in youth, and draw on those great reserves which God has laid up to meet the demands of ripe manhood, and then be the same man that a life of virtue and temperance would have made him. Though for a score of your years you be a saint, yet your knowledge, and your power,

and your development in Christian manhood will *always* be lacking by the measure of the twenty years you gave up to sinful pleasure. No! I am wrong. The lack will be greater than that. Let a man plant shoots of poisoned ivy, and handle them until the venom has gotten into his blood; and when the time to sow corn arrives, and he finds himself so weak from the effects of the poison that he can not go out into the field, so that his corn can not be sown, *then* it will appear that he has not only reaped a harvest of pain and of lost time from his ivy planting, but also a loss of power to plant a better crop. It is bad enough for one to feel that so many years have gone irrecoverably out of his life; but worse than this, to wake up to the knowledge which always comes in the effort to make good the past, that he has lost *power* as well as time; that he can not *start* on the road to reformation with the same energy and nerve and steadiness of will with which he plunged into a career of sin.

Then, too, there is another and most appalling aspect of this truth, in the fact that the law of multiplication which operates in every seed very soon puts the fruit beyond the sower's *control*. Seeds in nature have not only a power of multiplication, but a power of *diffusion*. There is that familiar little flower known as a lady's-slipper. You know how often as a child you have amused yourself with snapping its little pods and scattering the seeds. Just leave it to itself, and in due time it will explode its own pods, and throw the seed about as if out of a little mortar. Just so you may see the down of the dandelion carried by the wind, and you know that means a crop of dandelions on whatever soil the wind may let it fall. There is a man who plants thistles in a corner of his field. He says: "I want only a *very few* thistles; I will limit them to this little patch." It would seem that he has not studied the nature of thistles. Some day the air is alive with the flakes of thistle-down. By and by he begins to find thistles in his

flower-garden, and thistles among his melons and pease, and thistles in some grain field half a mile away. That is not the worst of it. The seeds have gone over into his neighbor's fields and gardens ; and they, too, reap the tormenting fruit of his little thistle patch. He may uproot every thistle from his ground : he can not undo the work they have done. The seeds from his garden have taken root in fields far away, and they in turn have committed *their* growth to the wind, which has borne it on to take root somewhere else. The thing has gone out of his power entirely. The very same thing is true of moral growths. What a man sows that he reaps--something the same in *character*, but not the same in *quantity ;* oh, no. He reaps *more* than he sowed. The fruit of his good or evil deed comes up thirty, sixty, an hundred fold, and it drops into his neighbor's fields, and multiplies there no less than in his own, and his neighbor too reaps from his sowing. Men flatter themselves that their moral influence

is under their own control; that they can affect society as much or as little as they please. There never was a greater mistake. In this complicated scheme of things in which we live, any man is like a bungler in a telegraph office. He goes about touching this or that, not meaning, perhaps, to do any harm, but his lightest touch may set an electric current moving round the world. No man knows to-day what fruit the errors which seem to him most trifling may be bringing forth in other lives. In bad things as in good, the fruit of the handful of corn shakes like Lebanon. One act of yours or mine, one word, may set in motion forces whose career of ruin and desolation no repentance on our part can arrest. Ah, there is many a good man to-day, rich in the respect and confidence of society, who would gladly give all that he is worth if he could only undo some deed of his earlier years which, by its own law, must needs go on unfolding and multiplying, spite of his bitter repentance, and which

daily thrusts its dead-sea fruit into his face, reminding him that he sowed it with his own hand.

But, it may be said, such applications of the truth, while they are fair and plain, must not be pushed too far. In the region of religious thought, where there is so much room for honest difference, this law does not hold. God is just, and God loves honesty, and whatever is honestly sown, the harvest will be good. Pray, *why* does the law not hold here as elsewhere? If a stupid farm-hand gets hold of the wrong seed-bag, and sows rye when he thinks he is sowing wheat, will he reap a harvest of wheat because he honestly thought he was sowing wheat? If a man honestly believes that two and two make six, will his problem yield the right solution because he was honest? If you start from wrong positions in your thinking, or in your faith, shall you move straight out to right results because you believe your positions were right? No. God directs us to these lower, ob-

vious applications of the law; tells us of sowing and reaping, in order to show us how the same law holds in higher regions; how it prevails all the way up from the clod to the angel. Whatsoever a man soweth *that* shall he also reap. Human *action* develops its appropriate consequence; so do human faith and human thought. A man may honestly believe that he has no need of a revelation; that the inward light of his own mind suffices for the development of his moral manhood. Be it so, then. His moral manhood shall be of his *own*, and not of God's shaping; and if it fall short of the symmetry and beauty of God's ideal, yet it is still what the man made it. He reaps what he sowed.

Or, he may say that a strictly moral life, the observance of a moral code, will satisfy all the demands of God and of his own nature, without regeneration, and faith in the Lord Jesus, and the work of the Holy Spirit. Be it so. All the honor and respect, all the self-satisfaction, all the usefulness

and influence which attach to a strictly upright life, he shall reap. But he shall *not* reap the fruit of a *Christian* life. Christianity implies morality, but morality and Christianity are not the same things. Christianity bears richer fruit. Familiar intercourse with a Saviour is sweeter than the bare observance of a code. Duty is a good thing, but communion with heaven inspires it. A code of laws is a good thing, but a living mediator, an *incarnate* law of life is better. The life of faith includes the life of duty, but it is a higher thing than the life of *mere* duty. And communion, and heavenly fellowship, and trust, and the quickening energy of the Spirit, and the inspiration of Christ's *inner* life—these are things which the mere moralist does not and can not reap. He reaps merely what he sows.

A man may honestly reject the Bible. What he may gather from other teachings I know not; but if the Bible contains any nourishment for his spiritual being, any exposure of errors in his thinking, any com-

fort for his trouble, any wholesome caution against secret evil—he does *not* reap these ; and if his thinking leads out to results fatal to his peace, if he is comfortless in his sorrows, if he has strayed into evils against which the Word cautioned him, he only reaps what he sowed.

He may sneer at the life of faith ; at being justified and saved by faith in Christ, and may think all will be as well in the end. Be not deceived. A life which starts from the stand-point of mere reason, and one which starts from the stand-point of faith, must diverge from each other, and *can not* reach the same end. There are those who stand outside the arena of religious faith and thought as mere spectators, affecting to be cool and dispassionate judges from a sublime height of pure reason. Such will tell you that all the phases of unchristian or semi-Christian thought are only sides of one truth ; that it makes very little difference which comes uppermost. It is not so. There *must* be a radical difference between

those to whom Christ is merely a pattern man, and those to whom He is Lord over all and blessed forever; between those to whom God is a personal Father in heaven, and those to whom He is but an impersonal essence, identified with the trees and the sea. Such views issue not only in *differences*, but in polar *oppositions*. The men who hold them, stand not side by side, but back to back. God is not mocked. Men can not evade their relations to Him. Those relations must be right or wrong; and so far as they are wrong, they must bring trouble and pain, distortion and confusion, according to the law by which wheat produces wheat, the law that whatsoever a man soweth he shall reap *that:* so that if he soweth to the flesh, he shall of the flesh reap *corruption.*

Men talk of retribution in the future as though there were something arbitrary and unnatural about it, forgetting that retribution comes out according to the natural working of the same familiar law by which a pear-

tree brings forth pears, and a nightshade deadly berries. The case is put in a sentence by the Spirit in John's vision: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still." Retribution in the other world is the natural, inevitable outgrowth of character in *this* world. He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption. When you bring the results of the two sowings together, you see that they belong apart. If the place of one is within the gate, the other's place is without. Nay, they would separate by natural repulsion. Bring to this city a man who had passed all his days in country taverns and stables, and who knows and cares for nothing beyond the low associations and gross ribaldry of bar-rooms, and place him in such a circle of Christian friends as might gather on any evening at your house or mine, would he be at home there? Could you put him in a more disagree-

able place? Would he not try to get away as soon as possible? Do you suppose an unforgiven sinner would be any more at home in heaven? We picture it as if an avenging angel drove him from the presence of God, where he would fain stay. Not so. His own *heart* would be the avenging angel. The sight of God's purity would make him flee through the gate, and call on rocks and mountains to fall on him, and to hide him from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne.

Enough has been said to illustrate the moral applications of this great law. The Apostle means that we should carry the law of the seed into the region of religion and morals. The great practical lesson of the text points to the sowing time. It tells us that our thinking, our beliefs, our deeds, bear fruit *in kind*. It emphasizes the truth that the harvest is enfolded in the seed, the appropriate consequence in the appropriate cause, and urges us to avoid the evil consequence by avoiding the evil cause,

rather than to trust to our power of repairing the consequence. Oh, how careful God is about *beginnings*. What admonitions and instructions and cautions He heaps up round the *starting* points of our lives. How He urges to *early* seeking Him; how He pleads with *youth* to remember Him. How He exhorts to seek His kingdom *first*. In how many ways He leads us up to the truth that a future is wrapped up in all our present. To-day the question comes to us, What are we sowing? *To* what are we sowing? God points out two fields, and two seed-vessels, and but two. He leaves us in no doubt as to what the harvest of each shall be. He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption. He that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. Sit down with God and your own souls, and confront this simple thought: What I am and what I am doing to-day are working out by their own law either corruption or eternal life. Which is it? God help you, if hitherto you have

sown to the flesh, to turn your back on that heritage of corruption, and to go humbly forth in God's strength with other seed into a goodlier soil, that your fruit may at last be unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

CHRIST AT THE DOOR.

COPYRIGHT, 1879, BY
ANSON D. F. RANDOLPH & COMPANY.

REVELATION iii. 20.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

CHRIST AT THE DOOR.

THE Church of Laodicea, to which these words are addressed, was one of the wealthiest and most important of the seven Churches of Asia. It is severely rebuked in this utterance of the Spirit, not for open apostasy, nor for hostility to the Christian faith, but for indifference, lukewarmness, lack of positive consecration, and enthusiasm. The consequence of this state is plainly declared to be rejection by God. "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot. So, then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." With such a result in view, it is easy to understand the urgency which pervades the succeeding appeal and exhortation to repentance. This urgency is deepened by the

figure in which the appeal is clothed—a figure which has grown familiar in Christian phraseology and in Christian art, in which Christ is represented as standing at the church's door knocking for admittance. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock."

The promise to any man who shall hear and open, warrants us in applying these words to the individual equally with the Church; and the great truth, therefore, which they set before us is Christ seeking admittance to the human heart. It is a truth of which even the naked statement is adapted to impress us profoundly. The spectacle of the incarnate God; the brightness of the Father's glory; the One to whom every knee is to bow; the Judge of the earth, taking the attitude of a suppliant toward the creature he has made, and asking leave to come in and possess his nature, is one which might justly call out the wonder of angels.

Notice the character of Christ's appeal.

You observe at once that it is a *personal*

appeal, not only made in person, but also with the sole view of fixing men's eyes upon Himself. "*I* knock. Admit *me*." In other words, Christ does not call upon men to open their hearts to a code of laws, or to a system of theology, but first to the power of His personal influence. Hence, His call in the Gospel is always a call to Himself. Follow me. Learn of me. Believe on me. Seek me.

And is this strange? Not surely to any one who knows how men at large are moved. The world indeed is moved by ideas, but not by naked ideas. Only as the idea clothes itself in flesh and blood; when it informs a living man, enlists his energy, possesses itself of his heart and conscience, speaks through his voice, and strikes through his arm, does it get into living contact with men. All the logical treatises in the world on the value of freedom will not so stir an enslaved people to cast off their yoke as the burning words and daring deeds of a single man striking for

liberty. Very few people will study systems; but none are exempt from the contagion of example. Comparatively few understand systems; but every one appreciates their principles when they take shape in character.

Therefore, if the Gospel had any purpose to enlist men's sympathy, affection, admiration, obedience; if it had any precepts to fix upon their minds, any doctrine to commend to their thought, it could compass these ends better than by submitting a theory of life to their reason. It could put before their eyes the life itself. It could have all its principles and precepts and doctrines lived out in plain sight. It could invest that character with all its graces, set it aglow with its affections and sympathies, and make sorrowful men leap for joy by its benefactions.

"And so the Word had breath, and wrought
With human hands the creed of creeds,
In loveliness of perfect deeds,
More strong than all poetic thought."

The Gospel rests, in short, on the person of Christ. It makes its great appeal to humanity through this. It has doctrines. It has system. It has laws; but it leads men to all these by the way of a personal acquaintance with Christ. If I wished to teach a child according to a method of my own, I should begin by trying to win his affection. I should keep the teacher in the background, and try to make him love me. I should expect that if I succeeded in this, his obedience would follow as a matter of course; and with his love and obedience, his instruction would be an easy matter. And if you will notice Christ's great invitation to the weary, heavy-laden world, you will see that it follows this order. First, "Come unto me;" then, "Take my yoke;" and then, "Learn of me." Leave the New Testament code of morals as it is, only take out of the Gospel the personal Christ, and its power over human hearts is gone. If it be only a voice that calls at men's doors hawking a code or a creed, men will at best

but go to the window and look out. They will not unbar their doors. If miracles be wrought under their windows, what of that? They prove little or nothing of themselves. All depends on who performs them. It is not the miracle that accredits the person, but the person who sanctifies the miracle.

Hence it is true that the force of the appeal lies in the fact that it is made by Christ in person, on the ground of His personal worthiness to enter and to possess man's nature.

This appeal is made to that in us which is human, and, therefore, fallen.

We are at direct issue here with a very popular phase of religious thought. You will be told by many that Christ goes to the human heart seeking for something divine which is already there; and that regeneration is nothing but the education of this divine germ; a thought which, I need not say, is well adapted to flatter human complacency. But it is a thought which has no foundation in Scripture. The picture here

is that of Divinity *outside* the door. The question is not whether fallen man reveals traces of his Divine origin. How can it be otherwise? Stand before that ruined temple, and though the lines of graceful columns are broken, and the sculptures gone from frieze and pediment, and the places of the old shrines given up to the lizard and the serpent, can you help seeing that it was the work of a master? So fallen man is not without signs that he came from God; but it is not for these that Christ is looking. He does not propose to build by recombining the old stones, however fairly chosen; but, rather, to rear a structure new from foundation to cap-stone. The Bible, I repeat, gives no countenance to this idea that salvation is the fanning of a smoldering spark of divine life. It rather sets the natural man down as dead in trespasses and sins. The work is not that of resuscitation; it is resurrection. It takes no account of any lingering traces of righteousness in him. "In Christ Jesus, neither circumcision avail-

eth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature," Gal. vi. 15. And "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new," 2 Cor. v. 17.

Therefore, Christ does not speak to the divine in us, saying, "O human goodness, I am drawn to you; admit me, that we may take counsel together." But rather, "O human weariness, how you crave rest. Let me in, that I may give you my peace. O human impurity, how foul you are. Let me in, that I may cleanse you. O human darkness, how dense you are. Let me in to dispel you, for I am the light of the world. O man, how sinful you are. Only the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sin, and I that speak unto thee am He. Behold I stand at the door and knock." He does not say, "I am come to complete something in you;" but, "I am Alpha and Omega: the beginning and the end; the first and the last. Behold I make all things new," Rev. xxii. 13: xxi. 5. He does not address

men from outside the door as sons of God. He asks admittance that He may make them such ; and it is only they that receive Him to whom He gives power to become sons of God,—John i. 12.

This appeal is radical in its character.

Christ stands at the door. The door of a man's house. How much of his true character and life are hidden from the world by it. That house is his secret place, where he is truly himself ; where he throws off all social masks ; where his schemes are matured, and his treasures hidden. Hence the house is no unapt figure of the heart ; and it is to the heart that Christ goes at once. Through all the outer courts of the life He makes His way directly to the sanctuary door. Here, at the seat of human will and affection ; here, where all radical influences must work if they work at all, Christ stands and knocks ; the perfect life seeking admission to the inner temple of our life. Christ attempts no work on the human soul that is not radical. He will

control the life from the centre. He will give no water save the water that shall be in man. It is not enough, my friend, that Christ's pure example may have touched or modified your life in this or that particular. Not enough that, standing so long in your outer courts, He has left there the fragrance of His presence, so that men know that Jesus has been there. Not enough that you have looked from your window and admired the One altogether lovely, and have turned away, not to open the door, but to comment admiringly to your friends on His perfections. Nothing is enough so long as Christ is on the outside of your life. He must get in. He must not only touch, he must master. He must not only modify, he must remold. He must be not an incident, but the principle of your life; the very life that you live, and not something attached to your life.

Having thus observed the character of Christ's appeal to human nature, we may notice THE CONDITIONS which are attached

to it, and which are two in number,—to hear, and to open.

This hearing involves several things. Observe that the condition is not "hear of me," nor "about me," but "hear my voice." Christ is not to be heard by proxy, as by one who sends a servant to the door to report the visitor's message. He must speak in person with the householder. Doubtless something is gained by the study and comparison of "lives of Christ," or, "theories of the life of Christ," but these will not supply the place of His direct, living contact with the heart. "The words which I speak unto you," says Christ, "they are spirit and they are life," John vi. 63. You may tell a man all you please about the power and magnetism of an orator; you may quote his utterances by the hour, and the man will never feel that power and magnetism until the orator himself speaks the words. You may reply, that at best we can only read Christ's words; that we can have nothing corresponding to the living speaker to bring

them home to us. I answer no. To admit this would be to admit that we serve a dead Christ; a merely historic Christ. But we who believe in the work of the Holy Spirit promised by Christ Himself; we who believe Christ's promise that this Spirit should perpetuate His life in His words in larger measure, that He himself should continue to speak with authority through the Spirit, and should give to His sayings a wider range of application, and a richer meaning than they had to the men who heard them from his lips—we believe that the personal Christ still speaks in His own words, and imparts the old magnetism of His personal utterance to him who reads under the Spirit's guidance. And to read the words and to study the life of Jesus thus, is to hear His voice.

Again, hearing Christ's voice implies hearing it as addressed personally to us. Men not infrequently listen to the appeals of the Gospel as one who sits busied in his office, thinking that the knocking which is

shaking his own door, is at his neighbor's. It is not strange that we flinch at these home thrusts of the Son of man. It is a great deal for us to admit that He is speaking directly to us when He addresses us as He does this Laodicean Church, as "wretched and miserable and poor, and blind and naked." But if we make up our minds to hear His voice, we must be prepared to hear, not our message, but His; not what is pleasant, but what is true; not what is flattering, but what is vitally important.

And, therefore, rightly to hear Christ's voice is to detect the urgency which pervades it. It is to hear in His message something like that which breathed in the words of the Almighty to Lot: "Escape for thy life. Look not behind thee. Stay not in all the plain," Gen. xix. 17. It is to recognize the urgency of a friend, and not of an intruder; of one who disturbs your slumbers because you and your house are in danger, and begs for admittance because he

sees that you have needs which only he can supply.

And, finally, to hear Christ's voice, is to hear in it the voice of authority—the word of the owner of the house, who has a right to instant entrance, and to absolute possession.

But the tenant of the house must not only hear, he must open. Christ stands at the door as one who is going farther. You ask me, perhaps, what it means to open the door to Christ? It means simply to give Him the opportunity of doing what He wants to do in your nature and mine. It is to say to the visitor, "Enter! The house is at Thy disposal. Go through every department of my being, body and soul, memory, mind, and will. Where Thou goest, do Thine own work in Thine own way. Destroy, or enlighten, or cleanse. Cut through windows where I have painted pictures to please my fancy, and let in Thine own light of truth. Break the sealed urns of tears if Thou wilt; only do Thy will. Thou art

master here." "Lift up your heads, ye gates, and let the king of glory in." Be subject, ye tenants of mine, to the new Lord. Go out, ye strong men armed, at His word. Disperse, ye troops of unholy lusts, at His bidding. Come in, though Thou break my idols and show me foulness in the rooms I had thought most clean. "Even so, Lord Jesus. Come quickly."

These conditions suggest corresponding obstacles to Christ's entrance. The fact needs no proof that He often stands long at the unopened door. Many of you know that picture entitled "The Light of the World." A house is in the foreground, the paths to it overgrown with weeds and thorns. At the closed door stands a figure crowned with thorns, and holding a lighted lantern, while the other hand lingers upon the door where He has just knocked. The stars gleam above Him, and the dews of the night are on His bowed head; but most touching, most suggestive of all, is His listening attitude, and the utter darkness of the house.

There He stands, with a world of divine yearning looking out of His sad, loving eyes; and one falls to thinking how long He may have stood, how often He may have knocked already; how long it will be before a light shall appear in the dark house, and the sound of the latch be heard from within. And picture and text alike tell the story, not only of Christ's patience in waiting, but of man's power to keep Him waiting. For you notice that Christ waives His right over the house. Either He will be admitted, or He will go away by and by; but He never will force His way in. No "irresistible grace" is brought to bear on man's heart. Christ, it is true, exerts a mighty attraction; but, as Luther truthfully said, "The drawing is not like that of the executioner who draws the thief up the ladder to the gallows; but it is a gracious allurement, like that of the man whom everybody loves, and to whom everybody willingly goes." Man can resist this attraction. How terribly that resistance is set forth in Christ's words to Jerusalem:

"How often would I have gathered thy children together, and ye would not," Matt. xxiii. 37. We plume ourselves on the dignity of our moral agency; but we forget sometimes how awful is the power with which it clothes us, the power to keep God from taking possession of the nature He has created and redeemed.

But while the obstinacy or unbelief or preoccupation of men may present obstacles to Christ's entrance, it is also not unfrequently delayed by a desire to prepare the house for His reception. It is so filthy, so ill-furnished, that it must be cleansed and arranged before it can be fit for such a guest. Therefore, the door is kept shut that more honor may be done to Christ by and by. One man says, "My mind is in some confusion respecting the Trinity or election or perseverance, so I will keep the door closed while I read and study a little more." Another, "My life has been so bad that I can not think of letting Christ in now. I must repent a little more, and take a little

more time to put my new resolutions in practice." And yet you would not reason in that way about your house in yonder street if it needed repairs. You would not say: I must patch up this wall, prop this falling corner, cast out this rubbish, so as to make it look a little better to the eye of the builder. Why, when the skilled master should have come in, would he not discover the true condition of the house at once, and laugh at your useless pains? You are not so foolish. You let the builder come into the house as it is, and see it at its worst, and take the whole work upon himself. So you are quite deceived if you think you shall honor Christ by trying to better yourself. You can honor Him in no way so much as by promptly opening the door, and letting Him enter your heart as it is. Are you waiting to understand Him better? One hour's close contact of His heart with yours will tell you more of Him, will more thoroughly convince you of His claim upon your love and allegiance than a year's criti

cal study. You want to mend and deck your garments; He bids you buy of Him white raiment, that you may be clothed. You want deeper penitence. Open the door. He says, "I will take away the stony heart, and give you a heart of flesh," Ezek. xi. 19. You want more faith. Open the door, and say, "Lord, increase my faith." You are puzzled about doctrines. Open the door; for "if any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine," John vii. 17. There is nothing, in short, which needs to be done in that heart of yours that Christ can not do far better than you can. The preparation of the heart is from Him,—Prov. xvi. 1. He will do all the sweeping and garnishing. "His fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor," Matt. iii. 12.

And now, finally, what result are we to expect from Christ's entrance? One would think a most sorrowful and disastrous one, from the pains men take to keep Him out. One would think that the foe to all happi-

ness, the disturber of household peace, was at the door; that some one of mean standing and few personal gifts, a guest whom it would be a weariness or a disgrace to entertain, was seeking admittance. But Christ does not put the matter in that way. He asks admittance, but not as a favor to Himself. He assumes that you do yourself a favor by admitting Him. And so far from regarding His entrance into the human heart as an occasion for tears, He broadly puts it here as an occasion of festivity. "I will come in and sup with him and he with me." How suggestive is this mutuality. "I with him and he with me." You remember the morning of the miraculous draught of fishes– after Christ's resurrection, John xxi.; how, when the disciples drew near to the shore where Jesus was standing, they saw a fire, and fish and bread laid thereon; and yet, though Christ had prepared a meal for them, He said, "Bring of the fish which ye have now caught;" and after that, "Come and dine." And so Christ comes not to do

away with our daily work and daily fare, but to take part with them. He with us. That is one of His names. "Immanuel"—God with us. He takes the common staples of our life on which to do His work. He does not dispense with our work. He does not relieve us of the duty of service. But then, on the other hand, it is, "We with Him;" and that is what imparts to our whole life the flavor of festivity. The fatted calf is killed, and the robe and ring brought forth, because the Son is with the Father. We with Him. With Him, our common fare, yea, the bread of tears, gets a new and heavenly relish. With Him our native power is sanctified. With Him our ordinary ministries are ennobled. With Him each ordinary meal becomes a feast. Run over in your minds the tables at which Jesus sat when on earth, and see what special blessing came each time with the heavenly guest. The miracle, with its varied lessons, at Cana: the blessing on a gift of love, sweeter than the perfume of the ointment

which filled Simon's banqueting-hall: the lesson of the one thing needful in the house where Martha served and Mary sat at His feet: the salvation which came to the house of Zacchaeus: the wealth of wisdom, love, comfort, and inspiration poured out in the discourses of the last supper: the revelation of the risen Lord at Emmaus. No invidious choice of His company. "If any man open the door, I will come in and sup with him." No flinging of crumbs as to a starving Lazarus. He shall sup with me, his Lord, and like lame Mephibosheth, eat bread at the King's table continually,—2 Sam. ix. 13.

And, in the light of such results, which Christ is longing to bring to pass in every human heart, how wonderful appears the indifference of men; how wonderful the patience of the Son of man. How often He knocks. How long He stands. His love for a soul is so intense that He can not give it up for a rebuff. How long has He been standing at some of your doors; knock-

ing, knocking by the pleading of His Spirit, by His providences, by the appeals of His ministers, and still the door is shut. I seem to see the house. The dust and mold are gathered thickly in every room. It is full from garret to cellar ; full of worldly schemes, of sordid thoughts, of ambitions realized and disappointed ; full of hoarded idols ; and as, now and then, in the spaces of silence which must come in your still busy life, you go with your dim candle from room to room, viewing your piled-up treasures, it is not with satisfaction ; for the mold has gathered on your pleasures. The pictures of old companions look sadly down from the stained walls and remind you that

> "The names you loved to hear
> Have been carved for many a year
> On the tomb."

Your unrealized ambitions mock you, and your idols shake on their pedestals as you pass, and startle you with the gathering hideousness that begins to mingle with their

pristine beauty. And even as you walk and ponder and weep, it may be, there comes up through the corridors that same old sound, the often-heard knock, and the voice still pleading, "Open unto me." But knock and voice are growing fainter. Every moment is precious. The bolt has been fastened so long, it will be hard to draw now. Christ has stood so long that He will soon go away. Are you going to let Him leave you thus amid the darkness and decay of your lonely house?

There is just one place in the world to which Almighty God asks admittance, and that is to a human soul. There is just one place in the world from which man has the power to keep Him—power of His own giving—and that is a human soul. God help us never to put forth that awful power. For, remember, there is a day coming when the situation shall be changed. A day when Christ shall be within the door, and you without, saying, "Lord, Lord, open unto us." Lord! Lord! How is it that you knew not

your Lord when He stood at your door? How is it that you insulted your Lord when He begged to be your guest? How is it that you refused your Lord when He offered you the riches of His grace and glory? Ah, you forgot His door when He stood at yours. You forgot that places might change and you become the suppliant. And when you find the door shut, and hear the voice which once besought you to open, saying, "Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh"—whom will you have to blame? What lack of patience, condescension, entreaty can you charge upon your insulted and expelled Saviour? There is still time. Still He stands at the door and knocks. At your hearts, young friends, while the morning is yet fresh. Think not that He comes to cast a shadow on your sunny life. Only hear His voice and open; and no banquet in the halls of worldly pleasure was ever

half so sweet as that shall be at which He shall sit down and sup with you. Business and professional men, in the full tide of your cares and successes; over the bustle of the market-place, through the maze of your thinking, comes that meaning knock. Christ is at the door. Will you not hear His voice and open? Dear children, Christ knocks at your hearts asking you to begin to love and obey Him to-day. And Christ speaks to the Church. Does He say, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock?" Does His voice come to us freighted with that awful message to the Laodicean Church, "Thou art neither cold nor hot?" Or is He joyfully welcomed, lovingly honored, and occupying the first place in our hearts and homes and ordinances? Be assured if it is not so, the fault is not His. He desires nothing more than to come in and make us abound in all true riches.

WHAT IS IT TO BELIEVE

ON THE

LORD JESUS CHRIST?

Copyright, 1876, by
Anson D. F. Randolph & Co.

'WHAT IS IT TO BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST?"

IN these words there is contained the Bible plan of salvation. The whole Bible is concentrated in them, and is shaped to emphasize them. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

It is commonly taken for granted that every one understands the meaning of this phrase, "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." An inquirer after the way of salvation is met with the words—"Why you must *believe*. You must have faith. You must trust in Christ"; and more

noticeable than in the views which are entertained by very many persons respecting a union with the Christian Church.

"Why should I join the Church?" is a question very often asked by men and women whom we must believe to be conscientious. Why can not I, supposing I am truly a Christian, be as good, and do as much good outside the Church as in it?

The question indicates a reluctance to take the step of public profession. It may arise from various causes. Perhaps from timidity, from a shrinking from publicity. Perhaps from a very deep sense of the solemnity of the obligations to be assumed, and a consequent fear of dishonoring a public profession. Perhaps from a lurking hesitation to commit one's self; an unconscious wish to keep some way of escape open. Ecclesiastical obligations may present a barrier to conscience. Or one may hesitate on the ground of conscious unworthiness. He does not feel himself good enough to unite with the Church.

I wish to try and answer for some of these, if not for all, the question, Why should I join the Church? Let us then take certain classes of objectors to this act, and, as far as time will allow, attempt to answer them in order.

First comes one with the Bible in his hand. "Show me where I am commanded here to join the Church. Give me chapter and verse." I like challenges of that kind. If a man is sincerely disposed to refer everything to the Bible, and to stand or fall by that, he will not go very far astray.

I reply then, to him: I do not know that there is anywhere in the Bible an express command, "thou shalt join the Church." Yet this may be, and the duty be none the less a scriptural one. Some duties the Bible leaves us to infer; and the obligation in such cases is no less stringent than when it is distinctly prescribed.

There is, in the first place, a plain statement of Christ, that His true followers are to confess Him before men: "Whosoever

though they were gold or silver. There must be something unseen and untouched which those bits of paper represent, some pledges which they set forth and which the tradesman believes, in order to make him give you his goods for your paper. Your child is taken sick. You know nothing about medicine. You do not know the difference between allopathy and homœopathy save in the most superficial way. You do not understand the child's disease; but you put that life, as dear to you, yea, dearer than your own, into the hands of a physician. He is your absolute master for the time. You do what he says, administer medicine which may be poison for aught you know to the contrary, and hope or fear according to his word. Thus, in the

most ordinary transactions, faith is constantly in exercise.

When, therefore, God made faith the very foundation of *religious* life, when Christ came and said, "Believe, that ye may be saved, and if ye believe not ye shall be lost," He did not speak of any *new* thing. He did not introduce a new faculty into the mind. He merely took this old faculty of faith, and gave it new direction, and new impulse, and a new object.

Up in yonder garret there is an old telescope; a good instrument, but for some reason unused. The children, as they rummage through the garret, light upon it and drag it out, and it becomes one of their favorite playthings. They twist the screws, and look through the glasses, and laugh at the strange dis-

tortions and colors of the objects they see through it. But by and by their tutor comes. He takes it from the lumber-room into the open air. He adjusts the lenses; he turns it upon the star-studded heavens as the night gathers, and then bids the children look. What exclamations of wonder burst from them. What glories are revealed to them. What a new interest the heavens assume to them from that hour, and what a new power their old plaything has developed. Even so God *found* faith among men, the faith of common life, which we have described; faith employed at a low level, in buying and selling, in domestic life, in the alliances of war and the treaties of states, faith in traditions, faith in kings and generals, faith in cruel superstitions. He took this faith and showed what power

there was in it. He turned it upon heaven. He revealed it as the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. He turned it upon Himself, and upon His son Jesus Christ. He showed men how, through it, all manner of sweet and precious things, the light and life and peace and power of God, could be brought down into their daily life and work.

You ask me, then, is faith in Christ—the faith by which men are saved from sin and its consequences—the same thing as the faith which I have in the servant's word, or in the value of the paper money, or in the physician? Is believing on Jesus Christ the same thing as believing that Columbus discovered America, or that Julius Cæsar conquered Gaul?

I reply, it *is* the same in character. It is belief on testimony. I have already said that when Christ commended faith to men as the ground of their salvation and spiritual life, He did not introduce them to any new thing. Believing is believing, whether it be believing history, or believing in the strength of a bridge to carry me over the water, or believing in the power and willingness and completed work of Christ to save me from my sins.

But yet, there is one element of this common faith which, when we come to apply it to Christ and to Christ's word and work, we need to emphasize: it is the element of *rest*.

And here I wish you to note very carefully the wording of the text. It is not "Believe the Lord Jesus Christ," but

"Believe ON the Lord Jesus Christ." There is a difference between believing a thing, and believing *on* it.

You took up the newspaper the other morning, and read that, the day before, a large charitable institution in Brooklyn had been burned, and that a number of persons had perished in the flames. You had not been in Brooklyn at the time. You did not see the fire, nor the charred remains of the unfortunate victims. But you had reason to believe that the information furnished by your newspaper was reliable, and you did believe it; and probably told the first man you met, "Such an institution was burned last night in Brooklyn. Eighteen people were burned to death." You stated it as a fact, and you *believed* it. That is believing a thing.

Now you write a letter to-morrow morning to a business correspondent in Liverpool. You enclose in it a draft for a large amount of money. You go to the Post-office, and drop it through a slit in the partition. You do not see where it falls, you do not know anything of the character of the clerk who will handle it; the letter goes out of your cognizance altogether from the time it leaves your hand. But you know something of the postal system. You know that Government has assumed the responsibility of carrying the mails; you know that you have received letters innumerable through the Post-office, and that multitudes of your letters have reached your friends through the same medium; and on such testimony you believe so far as that you are willing to commit something of great

importance to the care of the Post-office. You not only believe the fact that there is a postal system, but you believe *on* it. You *act* on your belief in its security. You say to it, in effect, "I so thoroughly believe in you that I give into your care this letter, and this large sum of money, to be carried by persons whom I never saw, and by vessels of the soundness of which I know only by hearsay, across the Atlantic to another land." That is believing *on* something. When some one reads to me the description of the United States postal system, I believe the facts. When I put my letter into one of its boxes, I believe *on* the system.

Now, similarly, faith in Jesus Christ, saving faith, is belief of certain facts in this history, and of certain words which He spake; but it is something

more. A man comes to me saying, "I am a sinner. I feel that I am lost by reason of my sin. Is there any hope for me?" I reply, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." He says, "I believe that there was such a person as Christ. I believe the facts that are related of Him in the four gospels. Is that enough?" No. The Philippian jailer believed most of that before he saw Paul, and yet he cried, "What must I do to be saved?" "But I believe that Christ spoke the truth. Is that enough?" No. I may believe that the guide-book is true in every particular, which tells me how to go to Rome or to Jerusalem, and yet it by no means follows from that that I shall ever go to either place. I may believe the guide-book all my life and stay at home.

"Well, I believe in the Divine character of Jesus. I believe that He is the Son of God." So do the devils, and they tremble at it. I may believe that the President of the United States has the right of a valid election to administer the laws; and yet I may be in a conspiracy against his life. "But I believe that Christ died upon the cross, and rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven, that He might save *me* from sin and destruction. Is not that enough?" No, not yet. You may tell me that there is a letter lying at your house for me, which you know is of the greatest importance; and yet though I believe you, believe the letter is there for *me*, directed to me, I may not go after it. I may forget it. I may think you overrated its importance. I may be too busy about other things. And so,

though the letter *is* for me, and I believe it, it may not come into my hands. Your belief is all right as far as it goes, but it has not yet reached the point of believing *on* Jesus Christ.

"But," says my inquirer, "I go farther still. I am a sinner and a debtor to God. The law has a claim against me but this gospel says Christ paid that claim on the cross. I believe that. I *take* that death as good for my claim, and I say boldly '*It is paid.*' I am tired of sin. Christ bids me rest on Him. I *do* rest on Him. He tells me that if I will only put myself, sins and all, with all my weakness, put my stained past, the guidance of the present, the whole matter of the future, in His hands, and leave it with Him, He will take care of the whole. I *do* put it all into His hands. I lay my sins

in Jesus. I rest my whole life on Him. I say to Him, 'O my Saviour, I do so thoroughly believe Thy word that I commit the forgiveness of my sins, the direction of my life, and the award of my future all to Thee. I do so thoroughly believe that Thou art better than all good beside, that I take Thee as my *only* good, and for Thee forsake all other.'" I say to him, "My friend, you have it now. You believe *on* the Lord Jesus Christ. Just rest there, and your feet shall never be moved."

And when he thus believes on the Lord Jesus, why, pray, should he not be at peace, quite as much so as you are about your letter when you have dropped it into the box? It is off your hands now. It is in other hands which can do what needs to be done much better than

you can. After you have deposited your letter, you do not go fretting about it day after day, and imagining all manner of disasters which may happen to it. You merely leave it, and are confident all will be well. Just so, when a man believes Christ sufficiently to put himself and all his belongings into His hand, why should he be troubled? About his sins? But they are not his any more. He has laid them off on Christ. About his obligation to the law? But the law has no claim on him: Christ has paid it. About eternity? But Christ has engaged to take care of that. Is not that man entitled to rejoice if he really believes all that? Here is a debtor shut up in prison. A friend comes to him and hands him a cheque for the whole amount of his debt, on a bank which he knows is sound, and signed

with a name which he knows is good for millions. He reads the name. He does not see the face of his benefactor. He does not see the gold in the bank vaults; but that piece of paper, that name, are evidence to him that his debt is cancelled. Does he not rejoice? Does he not say, "I am a free man?" Does he not tell every visitor, "My claim is settled?" Can he, as a sane man, believing as he says he does that that cheque is genuine, reasonably be sorry or fearful a moment longer? So, if I come to you, inquiring soul, with the gospel of the Son of God, telling you that Christ bore your sins in His own body on the tree, and you say you believe the fact, I ask you why you should be sorry any longer? If Christ made your peace with God, and you say you believe He did, why should you not

be at peace? Have you not a right to say, "The Son *hath* made me free, and I am free indeed"?

Thus saving faith is the perceiving, believing, and resting upon a fact—the atoning death of Jesus Christ. The failure to understand this is one fruitful cause of the confusion in many minds about this subject. For not unfrequently persons are looking into their *own hearts*, and trying to discover whether they have faith or not, instead of looking away from themselves altogether at the *object* of faith. They put the matter to themselves in this way. The Bible says that if I believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, I shall be saved. Now, if I were only sure that I believed I should be sure that I am saved. Let me see if I believe. And then begins the looking into the heart, the analysis

of faith, the attempt to follow the process of faith in the mind as it lays hold on Christ. "Is this faith? Do I now believe? Have I any doubt? Am I *sure* that I believe?" Why, such a process as that maintained for any long time would confuse the strongest mind ever created, and would go well-nigh to drive an ordinary man or woman insane. This microscopic study of one's thoughts and feelings would soon render him uncertain of the most palpable verities of his inner life. Any one of us could very easily bring himself to doubt, in this way, whether he loved his wife and children, or his dearest friend.

It cannot be too often repeated that the point which is to be emphasized is the *object* of faith, and not the *process* of faith. No man's salvation depends on

his *believing that he believes;* but it *does* depend on his seeing and receiving Jesus Christ as his Saviour. If he needs persuasion and demonstration at any point, it is as to how worthy Christ is of his trust. Christ is to be kept before him, and not his own feelings and mental conditions; the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice, and not the sufficiency of his own faith. When an engineer has built a bridge over a deep cut, and the stock holders of the road ride out to see it, suppose that when they reach the end of the bridge the engine stops. The directors get out and go forward and look at the structure. They begin to shake their heads. One says to another, "It doesn't look as if it would bear; I think the train had better not venture over." Do you suppose that the engineer wastes any

time in inquiring about the feelings of those directors, or in asking whether their eyes are in a healthy state? No. He just goes to work to show them *how strong the bridge is.* "See those piers. See those cables. Those strands will each stand so much strain. Twisted together they will bear so many tons. Look at this masonry. See this timber. Whether you feel thus or so is not the point. There is a structure which will *bear so much.* There are the figures which demonstrate it. There are the loaded cars, each carrying so many tons, which have passed over it." Once convinced of those facts, there is no more trouble with the directors. They go back to the cars and ride over the bridge.

When the Israelites had been bitten

by the fiery serpents, and Moses had been commanded to make the serpent of brass and set it up in the camp, any bitten man or woman who wanted to be healed must look at *that*. The cure lay entirely *outside* themselves. The only thing was to get the poisoned, dying wretch to fasten his eyes upon that brazen image. No one talked to his stricken neighbor about the structure of his eyes or the process of vision: it was all the serpent. "Only lift up your head. Just try to open your glazing eyes and look. There it is. The sun is shining on it now." There was no virtue anywhere but in the serpent. Similarly, the only thing that an inquiring soul is to look at is Christ. The processes of his own mind will take care of themselves. Just as a man goes to the letter-box and

drops in his letter, never thinking, or asking himself whether or not he has faith in the postal service: so a seeker of salvation, once *thoroughly convinced* that Christ is to him what the Gospel says He is, and that He may safely be trusted to do what He says He will do, simply drops into Christ's hands and rests there. The great thing is to convince him that the hands will hold him. You have all heard, scores of times, the story told by an eminent clergyman, of his child's faith. He was down in a dark cellar, opening by a trap-door into the room above, when his little daughter came to the door and looked down into the darkness. He could see her distinctly, but she could not see him. She called, "Father, are you there?" "Yes: jump down here." "But I cannot see

you, and it is all dark." "Never mind: I see *you*, and I will catch you." And hardly were the words out of his mouth, ere the little creature came flying into his arms. She was satisfied that her father was there, and that was enough. Seeker of Christ, are you *thoroughly* satisfied that Christ is your all-sufficient Saviour, and that He did a work on the cross which is entirely adequate to your salvation? Do you believe that bridge will bear? Do you believe those arms will receive you? Then *show* that you believe it, and drop, with all your sin, and weakness, and ignorance, and fear, into those bleeding hands. If you do *not* thoroughly believe it, keep your eyes away from your own heart, and fasten them on Christ, and study Christ, and go over Christ's promises, and keep

looking unto Jesus. He is the *author* as well as the finisher of your faith. Looking at Him will strengthen faith; and as you look, the sense of His power, and love, and grace, and tenderness will grow before your eyes, until your last doubt shall be overborne, and you shall cry, with Thomas, "*My* Lord, and *my* God."

This thrusting Christ forward distinctly as a point for faith to rest upon, is a thing which needs to be constantly kept in mind by those who are trying to point seekers to the Cross. Too often inquirers are instructed, if it can be called instruction, in vague commonplaces; such as "Look to the Lord." "Come to Jesus." "Give your heart to God." And all the while they are yearning to ask, "What does it all mean? You are

telling me to believe: tell me simply what you want me to believe; what God asks me to believe." I know that many a poor soul has wandered long in the dark, aye, and I fear, never fairly gotten out of the dark, because some well-meaning, but blind guide gave him to understand that what he wanted would come to him in some incomprehensible way, in the shape of his "*feeling better;*" that he would know and recognize the thing when it came: and left him to grope thus ignorantly, and by and by to accept, perhaps, some reaction of feeling—a reaction it might be from pure mental fatigue—as the rest and peace of the Gospel. There is nothing vague about the Gospel plan of salvation. It is something which can be explained and comprehended. It deals with *facts*,

and not primarily with *feelings*. The proper feelings and emotions grow out of a soul's right relation to the facts; and the *great* fact to be thrust forward and kept before the eyes of an inquirer is, "Jesus Christ died for you; and by His death is able to say to you, If you will give yourself into my hands, I will take care of your past sins, of your relations to God, of your life in this world, and of your eternity in heaven! Do you believe this? Do you believe it enough to take Christ at His word, and to trust all this to Him?" I was talking with a minister a few days ago on this subject, when he remarked, "I cannot remember having ever passed through the changes of feeling which many describe; I do not know that I can fix a point of time at which I could say I was converted. But

I know just this: that I am willing to stake *everything*, now and hereafter, on the fact that Christ died for me."

You never will bring a man to restfulness in faith until you give him a clearly-defined object on which to rest. The clearest, strongest, most tranquil faith, is that which is underlaid by the clearest perception of Christ's character and atoning work.

There is a little tract written by a well-known pastor of this city, at the close of which occurs an illustration which has always appealed to me as one of the best possible statements of this whole matter. A vessel was coming into this port in the midst of a heavy storm. The danger increased as she drew near the coast. For hours the captain had been on deck amid the sleet and rain,

watching every movement, almost dead for want of sleep, yet afraid to close his eyes for a moment. At last, through the mist appeared the pilot-boat. The pilot came on board. What did the captain do? Did he still remain on deck, straining open his weary eyes? Did he still burden himself with the responsibility for cargo and passengers? No. He knew that the pilot knew how to handle the ship; that the pilot knew the coast better than he did. He just threw off the whole load upon the pilot, and went below and rested. Dear seeker of salvation, doubting, fearing Christian, you are beaten by the billows of sin and fear, swept by the gusts of doubt. Look through the mists and behold the pilot. Christ comes to you to take everything in charge. Will you let Him come? Will you *give* Him charge? Will you just throw off the whole load of sin, doubt, and fear on Him, and *rest?*

WHY SHOULD I JOIN THE CHURCH?

COPYRIGHT, 1879, BY
ANSON D. F. RANDOLPH & COMPANY.

"WHY SHOULD I JOIN THE CHURCH?"

"From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."—EPH. iv. 16.

THE point of special consideration in this text, is that the efficiency and healthfulness of the whole body is secured by the combination of many parts. Every part works effectually; every joint supplies something; and so the whole body, by means of the harmonious and effectual working of its various members, is a healthy and beautiful unit.

This principle of strength through union has embodied itself in one of the most familiar of our popular proverbs. Yet, familiar as it is, it is astonishing how often it is ignored in some of its moral and religious applications.

And at no point, perhaps, is this more

noticeable than in the views which are entertained by very many persons respecting a union with the Christian Church.

"Why should I join the Church?" is a question very often asked by men and women whom we must believe to be conscientious. Why can not I, supposing I am truly a Christian, be as good, and do as much good outside the Church as in it?

The question indicates a reluctance to take the step of public profession. It may arise from various causes. Perhaps from timidity, from a shrinking from publicity. Perhaps from a very deep sense of the solemnity of the obligations to be assumed, and a consequent fear of dishonoring a public profession. Perhaps from a lurking hesitation to commit one's self; an unconscious wish to keep some way of escape open. Ecclesiastical obligations may present a barrier to conscience. Or one may hesitate on the ground of conscious unworthiness. He does not feel himself good enough to unite with the Church.

I wish to try and answer for some of these, if not for all, the question, Why should I join the Church? Let us then take certain classes of objectors to this act, and, as far as time will allow, attempt to answer them in order.

First comes one with the Bible in his hand. "Show me where I am commanded here to join the Church. Give me chapter and verse." I like challenges of that kind. If a man is sincerely disposed to refer everything to the Bible, and to stand or fall by that, he will not go very far astray.

I reply then, to him: I do not know that there is anywhere in the Bible an express command, "thou shalt join the Church." Yet this may be, and the duty be none the less a scriptural one. Some duties the Bible leaves us to infer; and the obligation in such cases is no less stringent than when it is distinctly prescribed.

There is, in the first place, a plain statement of Christ, that His true followers are to confess Him before men: "Whosoever

therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven," Matt. x. 32.

But it will immediately be said by our objector that this has no necessary bearing on Church membership ; that it means only that Christians are to be consistent with their professions, and to set a holy example, and to let their light shine in good works and Christlike dispositions.

And surely this is true. No profession of faith, no confession of Christ, however made, is of the slightest value without the witness of the good profession in the daily life. I insist upon this.

Yet it may fairly be asked if this is all : and in order to answer this, we must try to ascertain how Christ Himself regarded the matter ; and thus we have to meet this question : Were the circumstances such as to lead us to suppose that Christ had in His mind, as a part of the confession which He enjoined, a union with a body of believers ?

Now, a Christian community was not an

accident of Christ's ministry, nor was it an arbitrary institution. It was a necessity. The moment a man embraced Christ's teaching, he entered upon a region of new ideas and principles, new affinities and desires, which separated him measurably from the society about him, and set him in direct opposition to much of its spirit and practice. Several forces therefore operated to draw Christ's followers into a community. The human social instinct, the longing for human companionship and sympathy, set each man, the moment his faith and practice cut him off from society, or put him at odds with it, looking round for a brother in the same circumstances. Their weakness would naturally combine them for defense. Their common experience would develop mutual sympathy; and then, above all, they had a visible point of union. However they might be affected toward each other, they had a common love and admiration and reverence for Christ, which organized them round Him, made them co-operate to-

ward the same ends, use the same means, and seek the same rewards. When, then, a man confessed Christ in the days of His early ministry, he necessarily identified himself with a community. When Christ said "follow me," he who obeyed must needs follow *in company*. The society of the time knew him not only as a follower of Jesus, but as a member of a party. And so those who charged Peter with his discipleship, not only said, "Thou wert with Jesus of Nazareth," but "Thou also art *one of them*," Matt. xxvi. 73.

If you study the words of our Lord to His disciples, especially in that last most memorable discourse, you will notice how His counsel is framed for a community; how much stress is laid upon their union in Him, and their mutual love and helpfulness. And when He is about to ascend to the Father, His last words provide not only for the preaching of the Gospel to every creature, but for baptism—the universally recognized seal of incorporation with a body of believers.

There can be no manner of doubt of Christ's intent to form a Christian community; and those who came fresh from daily converse with Him, under the special enlightenment and power of the Spirit which He had promised, spoke of the Church as an existing and recognized institution. The multitude converted at Pentecost are declared to have been added to the Church as a matter of course. The apostles always acted upon this assumption. When a man professed faith in Jesus Christ, he was at once baptized and enrolled in the Church. It never seemed to have entered the minds of the apostles that a man could be a Christian and not a church member. They would ordinarily have refused to believe in his sincerity if he had refused to receive baptism after declaring that he believed in the Son of God.

And the apostles, who surely ought to have known the mind of Christ in this matter better than any other men, uniformly represent the Church as Christ's special

care. The Church is "the bride; the Lamb's wife," Rev. ix. 1. He redeemed it with His precious blood. He "gave Himself for it," Eph. v. 25, that He might purify a people to Himself. He walks amid the seven golden candlesticks in the Apocalyptic vision, and says they are the "seven churches," Rev. i. 20.

If, then, Christ instituted a Church, a body of believers; if this institution was to Him a dear and cherished intent; if the organization is the object of His peculiar love and care; if those who received their instructions directly from Him, insisted on union with the Church as the medium of a Christian profession—it seems to me that a true regard for Christ binds *us* no less than those of apostolic days to confess Him through the same medium, and to honor what He so loved as to shed His blood for it. That on which Christ laid such special stress; that which He was at such awful cost to establish; that for which He so mightily prayed, must have a part, and no

small part, to bear in our Christian profession and life.

But, further than this, Christian ideas have penetrated society to that degree that the outward distinction between a Christian and a man of the world, is not as sharp as it was then. To be a Christian now is to be respectable; whereas then it was to be an outcast. And Christian ideas have toned up morality to such a point that the difference between a Christian and a moralist is not at once patent. And hence it follows that Church membership helps to emphasize this difference. Society may honor a man's uprightness and benevolence; but he identifies himself closely and decisively with Christian sentiment and Christian work by Church membership, as he can not do in any other way. If his integrity and amiability and liberality are impelled and maintained by Christ, he owes it to Christ, and he owes it to the world, to let the fact be known. Society ought not to be left to conclude, as it will conclude, without some formal ac-

knowledgment of his Christian allegiance, that these ripe and fair results are the fruit of natural goodness alone.

But here comes another objector—a well-satisfied man, who says, "What need have I of the Church? I can be as good, and do as much good outside as in it."

I wonder how far you are willing to apply the same rule. Some of you, I dare say, served during our last war, and know something about military matters. Suppose one of you had gone to his commander on the eve of an engagement, and said, "I want to be excused from going into the ranks to-morrow. I see nothing that is to be gained by these movements in regiments and companies. I want to fight; I have a good rifle and plenty of ammunition; I am a good shot, and have experience enough to take care of myself; so I should just like to move round the field and shoot when and where I please." I suppose that you would have been sternly ordered to the ranks, or else sent to the guard-house. What would

become of an army, each man thus manœuvering by himself? The enemy, with his close battalions, would sweep it away like a flood.

Let one come to your office and say, "How foolish of you to maintain a partnership. Each of you is a good, safe business man; why not each conduct business for himself?" You would probably reply, "Neither of us has capital enough to carry on such a business as this; but our joint stock enables us to conduct it with profit." The principle is familiar enough; the principle of the wise man's words, "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward of their labor." The power of the one soldier incorporated with that of ten thousand other men is multiplied twenty fold. Your hundred dollars thrown in with a million is a greater power than if used in some little investment. Your business, founded on the joint capital of yourself and your partner, yields larger returns than the two capitals separately employed. Why now evade the application of the same

principle to the Church? You call yourself a Christian. You say Christ has a right to your services. You have a certain amount of power to invest for Him. The question is where your five or ten talents will turn the largest interest. The Church has accumulated a large capital of experience and piety and influence. She has her methods matured. She knows the fields of effort. She has machinery to carry out her plans. It is fair to presume, is it not, that your stock of knowledge, or piety, or means will work to greater profit under some such organized economy than by itself; that your inexperience will get its best training and direction among those who have for long years been studying and prosecuting the ends of Christian enterprise? This is the mere business basis. There is something more than this.

Those are very exceptional men that develop a sustained enthusiasm through years of lonely work Most of us need the contact and sympathy of a body of fellow work-

ers to keep our zeal at the proper pitch. Hands will hang down now and then, and feet grow weary and stumble. "Woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up," Eccles. iv. 10. Even in the Church itself you will now and then find one who, through diffidence or natural reserve, keeps his Christian experience mostly to himself—never tells any one about his trials or temptations; and usually you will find that that person thinks no one was ever tried as he is; that his experience is quite peculiar. And if you can once break through that reserve, and draw him into a free conversation with two or three experienced, warm-hearted Christians, you will find the man begin to open his eyes. He is not quite so peculiar as he thinks. He finds that other people have known something of the rough places of Christian life as well as himself; and he goes away from that circle with a new spring of cheer in his heart; with a glimpse of a way out of his straits; with a new courage won from

a brother's intelligent sympathy, and a new antidote for his trouble gathered from a brother's larger experience. If a man is in danger of such a mistake within the circle of Church influences, how much worse is his case who keeps aloof altogether from Church fellowship. He will make sad work of trying to be a lonely Christian. He will get into a great many difficulties which he might easily escape, and be ignorant of a great many things which he might know. It may be said that Christ has promised His sympathy and help to His troubled followers, and that these are better than anything that men can give. That is true, and you will find it true if Christ ever shall call you to go out into the wilderness *alone* with Him; but meanwhile remember that Christ makes His children His agents in imparting many of His choicest blessings; and that therefore in rejecting Christian fellowship it is possible to cut one's self off from Christ's presence and from Christ's gifts.

And then it is in a man's religious development, very much as it is in his development in other things. Let him pursue his own way; isolate himself from society; shut himself up with books; *make himself*, as the phrase goes — and it is rare that such a man's development is not one-sided. He may have power and learning, but society, in its infrequent contact with him, will find him as full of sharp points as a rough mass of quartz. He will be opinionated, narrow, conceited; and society will either drop him altogether, or else handle him without excessive tenderness. In short, after a man has acquired all that his books, and his schools, and his own industry and talent can give him, there is an element necessary to complete him, which nothing but human contact, and a good deal of it, can give him. Solitude never develops ripe and well-rounded men, though it often nurses men of power. And, I repeat, it is just so in Christian development. A man's views of truth, his moral estimates, the general tone of his

religious life, the character of his teaching, all require something which only Christian fellowship can give them. Even our Saviour would not pray that His disciples should be taken out of the world, John xvii. 15. Rather He said: "Go into all the world," Mark xvi. 15. Society is the very atmosphere in which Christian experience unfolds best, and a Christian in habitual solitude is as much out of his element as a fish upon dry land. The worst specimens of religious character are those who refuse the clasp of a brother's hand.

Another objector appears; one to whom our hearts go out in love and admiration for his high conscientiousness. He says: "I am not good enough to enter the Church. The obligations are so solemn, I am afraid to assume them lest I should not keep them." So the obligations are ineffably solemn; obligations to take the Lord for your everlasting portion; to renounce the Devil and all his works; to take up the cross daily and follow Christ. I would not

bate one jot of their solemn import. I rejoice when the appreciation of these is so vivid as to make the candidate ponder well the step he is about to take. And yet on the same ground, you might refuse to put yourself *privately* under bonds of allegiance to Christ. These surely are no less solemn than obligations assumed toward the Church. What can exceed the solemnity of that closet covenant in which you gave yourselves to God? Yet you have ventured to make *that*. You fear you may walk inconsistently before *men*—what of your walk before *God?*

And as regards your ability to maintain your obligations, has Christ called upon you to assume any obligation which it is going to be impossible for you to observe? Ah, if you went forth to this conflict with sin in your own strength; if you were expected to grow into the likeness of your Lord, only by such nourishment as poor humanity, the best of it, affords, you might well hesitate. But even as your trembling lips pronounce the words of allegiance, and your eyes look

fearfully at the coming crosses and temptations, His voice whispers: "Let not your heart be troubled. Believe in me," John xiv. 1. "Lo, I am with you alway," Matt. xxviii. 20; "and this is the victory which overcometh the world, even your faith," 1 John v. 4. You need not discourage this sense of weakness. It is what God wants you to feel. He does not intend to glorify your strength in your Christian conflicts, but to perfect His strength in your weakness.

Withal, it is not at all probable that your Christian life will be a perfect life. It will be strangely unlike every other Christian life if it be not marked by errors and falls. You will be a babe in Christ before you shall have become a strong man; and Christian profession does not commit you to instant perfection of character, any more than birth commits you to instant manhood. Becoming a Christian does not make you perfect. It only puts you on the road to perfection. And while I give this word of comfort to you, I want to give also a word of caution

to those who, so surely as you shall become a member of Christ's Church, will seize upon the first display of your infirmity to rebuke you and excuse themselves from following you. Please to remember, you who censure so sharply, and ask, "Is this a specimen of a church member?"—please to remember that no Christian claims to be anything more than a *pupil* of Christ: under discipline, fighting, not yet victorious. Do not look for the crown and the spotless robe of triumph while the man is still covered with the dust and blood of the fight. After all, the stumbling, weak, erring, yet ever contending Christian has an advantage over you. A quaint old divine of the 17th century, William Gurnall, in his "Christian in Complete Armor," puts the case strongly and well. "True grace when weakest, is stronger than false when strongest. There is a principle of Divine life in it which the other hath not. Now life, as it gives excellency, so it gives strength. The slow motion of a living man, though so slow that he can

not go a furlong a day, yet coming from life, imparts more strength than is in a ship, which, though it sails swiftly, hath its motion from without." Aye! There are some of those stumbling ones; some of those who have fallen more than once, and whose sad stains the Bible is at no pains to conceal, yet whose power in the religious thought and feeling of the present you yourselves confess. Hear a word or two from a man who is called an infidel, and who will not be accused of any undue partiality for Scripture heroes. "David the Hebrew King had fallen into sins enough, blackest crimes—there was no want of sin. And therefore the unbelievers sneer, and ask: Is this your man according to God's heart? The sneer, I must say, seems to me but a shallow one. What are faults—what are the outward details of a life, if the inner secret of it, the remorse, the temptations, the often battled, never-ended struggle of it be forgotten? David's life and history, as written for us in those Psalms of his, I consider to be the truest

emblem ever given us of a man's moral progress and warfare here below. All earnest souls will ever discern in it the faithful struggle of an earnest human soul toward what is good and best; struggle often baffled, sore baffled, driven as into entire wreck; yet a struggle never ended, ever with tears, repentance, true unconquerable purpose, begun anew."—CARLYLE.

But the other objection: I am not good enough. I must feel satisfied with my attainments in grace before I can unite with the Church. And how long will you remain outside if you wait for this? The more you know of Christ, the less you will be satisfied with self. So long as you shall be honestly striving to copy the example of Jesus, your own heart will never sign your passport into the Church. Do not cherish this mistake any longer. As you have looked, with hungry eyes, in days past, upon the band of Christians at their sacred feast, and have longed to be sitting there with them, have you thought that they were eating and

drinking in the consciousness of goodness or worthiness? No, no. Not one sincere heart was there which, while it glowed with gratitude and praise, did not also weep over past errors, and conscious weakness and unfaithfulness, and mingle the prayer for pardon with the hymn of thanksgiving. And you will know all about this when you shall come (as God grant you may soon come) to the Eucharistic feast yourselves. The principle on which the Church is founded is that of our text. The union of many parts, each small and weak in itself; and when a man comes to the Church's doors and knocks for admission, he does not say, "I have attained the standard of holiness required for Church fellowship. I am strong enough and good enough now to come in and live and work with you." No. He says: "I am too weak to stand alone. I am too inexperienced to escape Satan's snares. I must have sympathy or my heart will break. I am ignorant and erring. Brethren, open your doors to me. Give me

shelter. Lend me your helping hands. Bear with my errors. Let me walk toward heaven with you. Take in return what little power I have. Use it for Christ, and teach me to use it." The Church is for such as these: instituted not for the strong, but for the weak, not for the wise, but for the foolish.

Sometimes I have heard it said: I am not fit to join the Church, because I can not name the day and hour of my conversion. Suppose a traveler should have stood by the bank of the Nile twenty years ago, and watched the waters come up over the land and go down again, leaving the rich soil full of seeds, and have seen the fields grow green with the coming harvest, and then have turned away saying, "The Nile flood does no good. I know nothing about its source;" would the harvest be any less abundant because the great river hid its head? The question is not when nor how you were converted; but, *do you now believe in Jesus your Redeemer?* If the power

of Christ is at work in your soul now, if the seeds of grace are bearing fruit in your life, if its current sets toward God, what matters it if the beginnings of all this be hidden?

There is another objection raised about doctrinal peculiarities. Many say: "I can not find a Church whose creed covers all the points of my belief, or allows me at the same time to hold my own convictions on certain points." A very wide subject is opened here. Yet one or two things may be said to purpose. The difficulty is too often one of man's making and not of Christ's. I am free to say that no Church which is conducted upon a true Christian basis will present any real difficulty to one who sincerely holds the great essentials of the Christian faith. The Church is a school. She has a right to require of her *teachers* assent to such theological views as the particular branch to which they seek admission may hold. But she receives members as *pupils*, and has no right to require of them,

as a condition of admission, an assent to anything beyond the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. By its constitution, the particular branch of the Church is bound to teach those whom it receives according to its own scheme of Christian doctrine. It can not do less in common consistency. But to require assent, as a condition of church membership, to a theological scheme to which, in scores of cases, a candidate can give neither a conscientious nor an intelligent assent, is to go in the face of Christ, and of the fundamental principles of His Church. What the Church has a right to require of those who seek her communion is, satisfactory evidence that they love our Lord Jesus Christ and trust in His merits alone for salvation; that they shall be willing to submit to the government and discipline of the Church so long as they shall remain in it, and be baptized, as Christ commanded (no matter in what way), as the outward sign of their union with the body of believers. With such credentials as these,

no Church has a right to turn an applicant from her doors. And I may be allowed to say, that when the Presbyterian Church is true to her own declared principles, there is no Church on the face of the earth which opens a wider door to the true followers of Christ than she does.

And on one other point I must briefly touch. It is an important and a delicate one. An objection comes sometimes in this form: "I am waiting for my wife. I am waiting for my husband; for my brother, or for my sister." And I know that, in many cases, this consideration is sincerely urged, and is not a mere excuse for neglect of duty. Nevertheless, I can not help feeling that this is a matter between each soul and Christ. I can conceive cases in which it would be quite right to delay uniting with the Church. If you resided in a place where there was but a single church organization, and if union with that required of you assent to what your conscience could not approve, you would do wrong to unite with it. But

when the question is merely that of accommodating yourself to the delay of the most intimate friend, the nearest kinsman, then I doubt if you are excused. I repeat—this matter is between your own soul and God; between you and your Master, Christ. Nothing has a right to stand between you and the open door of that fold into which He calls all His own sheep. No one has the right to stand between you and the duty of confessing your Saviour before men.

With these considerations before you I trust that some of you who have been long undecided on this important step in Christian life, will take it soon. Come to Christ's altars, feeling that you come by His express command; that the Church is His own institution, and His appointed medium of the Christian profession of His followers.

Come, because your power can be turned to best account under the great, matured systems of the Christian Church, and in concert with the vast power already enlisted there.

Come, because you need the Church's

shelter, sympathy, and help, so that when you fall there may be the right hand of a fellow to lift you up.

Come, notwithstanding your doubts and fears. Your obligations are solemn. It is well that you feel their solemnity. May God deepen the impression. But remember that you assume not one of them in your own strength; that when you speak of strength, lo, He is strong! Remember that you will come into no community of perfect men and women, but into a society of weak and fallible ones who, because each is weak, have united to help each other.

Members of the Church, this approaching communion reminds us anew of the principle of our church organization. We are the Master's representatives in strengthening weak hands, confirming feeble knees, and saying unto fearful hearts, "Be strong." Our testimony of love to Christ is through His brethren. Oh, ought we not to strive to show those who seek our fellowship that the communion of saints is, to us, something

more than a formula? Ought we not to be at more pains to emphasize our fellowship to those who are without, to stand at our open doors with words of invitation, and with outstretched hands? Ought we not to be most cautious as to our walk and conversation, so as not to repel by inconsistency those who may be looking toward us with interest and even with longing?

NOT DISCERNING THE LORD'S BODY.

COPYRIGHT, 1879, BY
ANSON D. F. RANDOLPH & COMPANY.

I Corinthians xi. 26–32.

26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

27 Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

31 For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

32 But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

NOT DISCERNING THE LORD'S BODY.

HAS not this passage been a great torment to many of you? It would not be surprising if it were so. As it stands, nakedly, in our English version, mistranslated and unexplained, it is a terrible utterance. It does indeed leave open the gates to Christ's banqueting-house, but it flanks them with flaming swords. "Whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."

To a large class of communicants these words mean that if they shall come to the Lord's table unworthily, they will be as guilty as if they had actually assisted in

crucifying Him. That if they shall eat and drink unworthily, they sentence themselves thereby to perdition. If that were true, it were most horrible. If such an utterance as that was intended to guard the Lord's table against profanation, it has utterly failed of its purpose; for it has not acted to deter the careless and hardened, while its menace has struck terror to the conscientious and self-distrustful disciples, and has scared the little ones from their father's house. It argues terrible neglect, or mistake, or perversion somewhere, that a passage of the Word of God should have wrought so much mischief, keeping away from Christ's table such multitudes, and infusing bitterness into the very cup of the Lord for multitudes more.

Let us reverently approach these open gates. Let us, in Christ's name, challenge these fearful guardian texts, and see if they are the cruel, remorseless utterances which they seem to be.

To this end we must first understand the circumstances under which they were written.

You find them in a letter of Paul to the Church at Corinth ; a letter called forth by peculiar abuses which had crept into that Church, especially in connection with the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper, as we now understand it, was then associated with a friendly, festive meal, called the "agape" or love-feast. These feasts were provided by the guests themselves. Each one brought provisions according to his ability ; the rich being expected to furnish their poor brethren out of their abundance. The eucharist, the sacrament of the Lord's body and blood, closed the feast. But great abuses attached themselves to these feasts. You will find them described in the twenty-first and twenty-second verses of this chapter. The rich consumed the provisions they had brought instead of sharing with their needy brethren. Not only surfeiting and brawling, but even drunkenness not unfrequently prevailed. When the time for the celebration of the Holy Sacrament arrived, the or-

der and silence necessary could not be secured. The prayer and formula of consecration could not be heard in the general tumult, when the poor man, who had received nothing, was hungry and clamorous, and the rich, who had devoured his own portion, was surfeited and drunken.

You readily see why Paul should direct these disturbers of the Lord's Supper to the striking contrast presented by our Lord's institution of the rite. How sadly the noise, and riot, and greediness of the Corinthian assembly suggest the picture of the twelve, gathered with their Lord in the upper chamber at Jerusalem, intent, not upon satisfying appetite, but upon the person and words of Him who had declared Himself to be the bread of life. How sharp the contrast between the cry of gluttony for its share, and the Lord's appeal to His disciples to forget self in remembrance of Him.

Now it is evident why Paul proceeds to guard the sacramental table with such solemn warnings against eating and drink-

ing unworthily. Our next step, therefore, must be to examine the words themselves. And here, without going into any critical explanation, it is important that you should remember three things.

1st. That when Paul says (v. 27): that an unworthy communicant "shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord," he does not mean that that communicant does the same thing as if he should crucify the Lord, and is therefore as guilty. He means simply, that to partake of the Christian feast in a manner unworthy of its meaning, to proclaim the death of Christ in an unworthy spirit, with no regard to that death as His atonement or as a proof of Christ's love, is to proclaim that death as an indifferent person; to act a lie, and to offend against Christ as set forth in the symbols of His body and blood.

2d. You are to remember that the word "unworthily," in the twenty-ninth verse, does not belong there; was not written by the apostle himself, but was inserted, probably

from the twenty-seventh verse, by some later hand.

3d. You are to remember that the word translated "damnation," in the twenty-seventh verse, and understood by so many to mean eternal loss and ruin, does not mean any such thing, but simply means "judgment." That is, when a Corinthian Christian, or any other Christian in any age, should insult the Lord Jesus by partaking of the Sacrament in a wrong spirit, carelessly or presumptuously, he would expose himself thereby to Divine judgment, and to the appropriate penalty which Divine wisdom might appoint. If you want to see how absurd the rendering "damnation" is in this passage, turn to the thirty-second verse, where the same word is used, and put the word "damn" in the place of "judge." It will read then: "When we are damned, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."

But we find the word "unworthily" in the twenty-seventh verse, and rightly. And

therefore we naturally ask, what is it to eat and drink unworthily?

You will find the best explanation in the text itself. Let us read the twenty-ninth verse as it should be read, and the whole matter will be simplified. "*For he that eateth and drinketh, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself if he doth not appreciate or discern the Lord's body.*" That is to say, eating and drinking unworthily consists in not appreciating or discerning the Lord's body. The unworthy communicant is the one who does not have this appreciation or discernment.

Thus the whole of the remaining discussion turns on the question: What is it to discern the Lord's body?

There is nothing in this requirement which need terrify the unlearned. To discern the Lord's body is not to understand the mode of Christ's presence in the sacred symbols. That is a mystery which no Christian is required to penetrate. He may believe, with the Romanist, that he

partakes of the actual body and blood of the Lord; or, with the Lutheran, that Christ is "with, in, and under the bread;" or, with the Zwinglian, that the Sacrament is merely a memorial of Christ's sufferings and death; and though his view may be a mistaken one, in either case, he may receive it with a true faith, a real participation in its spiritual benefits, and a right discernment of Christ. On the other hand, he may come to the Lord's Supper with a perfect knowledge of the history of its institution, a clear understanding of its meaning, a correct view of its nature, and yet utterly fail to discern the Lord's body. Faith, by which such discernment is effected, is not only perceiving, but also accepting, grasping, and resting upon what is perceived.

To discern the Lord's body then, may be thus defined: *It is to perceive and to accept Christ by faith, in all those offices and relations in which the Holy Sacrament sets Him forth.*

What, then, are those relations and offices?

By the bread and the wine of the Lord's Supper we are pointed to—

I. CHRIST DYING;

II. CHRIST LIVING ON EARTH;

III. CHRIST RISEN, GLORIFIED, LIVING, AND INTERCEDING IN HEAVEN.

I. We consider, first, Christ dying, because that is the fact which the ordinance itself emphasizes. Broken bread and outpoured wine speak to us of the crucified and pierced body of our Lord; and our Lord Himself, in giving to the disciples the bread and wine at the institution of the feast, said: "My body given for you, my blood shed for you" (Luke xxii. 19, 20).

If, therefore, we are to believe Christ and the Scriptures, His death meant something beyond itself. It was for us. It was intended to confer a rich and lasting gift upon the world—the gift of salvation from sin. Hence the sacrament sets forth not only the fact of Christ's death, but its saving

purpose. A right discernment of the Lord's body, therefore, as related to His death, implies three things:

1st. Our discernment of Christ crucified.

2d. Our discernment of Christ crucified *for us*.

3d. Our receiving by faith the salvation of which His death was the instrument. For if we merely *see* Christ crucified and do not *receive* Christ crucified, we are but as those who "sitting down" by the cross, "watched Him there" (Matt. xxvii. 36) with idle curiosity.

We must guard against the tendency which shows itself in modern religious thought, to emphasize Christ's life at the expense of His death. His death is the point at which His life focalizes. Whatever of redemptive purpose we see in our Lord's life, we see chiefly through the light which streams back upon it from the cross. His life furnishes intimations which only His death can explain. Only at Calvary can we understand Bethlehem. Viewed merely as

an example, Christ is unintelligible. When the apostle points us to Him, he bids us consider not only the Apostle, but the High-Priest of our profession. In the light of Christ's own words: "My flesh which I will give for the life of the world" (John vi. 51), "my body given for you, my blood shed for you;" in the light of the old symbolic economy of sacrifice interpreted by the Epistle to the Hebrews, as realized in Christ; in the light of such words as these, "Christ, through the offering of whose body we are sanctified" (Heb. x. 10), "who appeared once in the end of the world to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb. ix. 26); "who by His own blood entered in once into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Heb. ix. 12); "who washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Rev. i. 5),—in the light of these and similar utterances, I say, to regard the sacrament as setting forth Christ merely as an example, is to convert it into a riddle. I have said that

Christ is presented in the sacrament as risen and glorified; but if He came into the world only to be our example, I confess I see no need of His resurrection. His mission as a model of character was fulfilled by His life and death, and having displayed that model, and having finished His career on the cross, what could be gained by His rising again and coming back to the earth? If He was only a good man, as is claimed, dying like other men, and passing into the realm beyond the grave under the same conditions as other men, why are we told of a visible ascension, of a sitting at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and of an intercession for men in heaven based upon the shedding of His blood upon earth? No, we do not rightly discern the Lord's body in the sacrament unless we see in it an atoning Christ as well as an exemplary Christ. Nor do I mean by this that rightly to discern the Lord's body is to have a correct philosophical theory of the atonement; to know just *how* Christ bears and takes

away our sins and reconciles us to God. I would not disparage the efforts of men to state and formulate the method of Christ's saving work. At the same time, such things are not necessary to a Christian discernment of the Lord's body. That child who has involved itself in trouble through its own fault, and who goes tearfully to its father and tells the whole story, is comforted when the father says, "Leave all that in my hands; I will take care of it." He is just as much comforted as though he knew precisely what the father was going to do to settle the difficulty. I know not why a Christian should not have the same comfort in the naked fact which the Father in Heaven tells him—"Christ died for your sins; lay them on Him and leave them with Him;" and that, though he knows as little as an infant how Christ's death is going to avail for him. The New Testament directs our attention far more to Christ's *person* than to Christ's *methods*. It fastens our faith more on the fact that by His death He takes away the

sin of the world, than upon how He does it. And this naked fact, Christ, as our surety with God, is quite sufficient of itself, when received by faith, to open to the believer the largest range of Christian joy, and the largest possibilities of Christian experience. *It is Christ who is the warrant for the method and philosophy of His atonement, not the method which is the warrant for Christ.* If one must needs understand the way in which Christ saves him, Christ points him to Himself: "I am the way" (John xiv. 6). Questions like this adjust themselves and approach solution just in the proportion in which Christ's person falls into its true place as the center of Christian faith and the sum of Christian hope. "All things are yours," says the apostle, because "ye are Christ's" (1 Cor. iii. 22, 23). In proportion as I know and love Christ better, I come nearer to an understanding of why He gave Himself for me; why He bore my sins. In proportion as I know Him better, I am willing to leave with Him

the mode of adjusting my relations to God, and to say with the child—the whole matter is in His hands. I am content to know that He died to make me a son of God. I have Him, and having Him, I have pardon, sonship, more abundant life, and heaven.

II. But though the sacrament presents Christ as *more* than an example, it sets Him forth as an example none the less. Thus it points us to His life as well as to His death. By discerning the Lord's body in this aspect, I mean that *we see in Christ the character and conduct which faith in Him ought to produce in us, and recognize and accept in faith our obligation to be like our Lord.* Thus a right discernment of the Lord's body commits us to holy living, and assures us of Divine helps to holy living. This sacred season is a break in a life of practical duty, of trial, of temptation, of conflict. We rise from the table to go back into all these, and it is an immediate and pressing question what faith is going to do for us there. How we are going to bear

ourselves; how we are going to keep pure amid the world's defilements; how we are going to be patient and faithful and unselfish and triumphant over temptation.

And in this holy rite, as we have seen the dying Christ, so now we are pointed back to the living Christ, and are bidden to remember Him in the street, at Cana, at Nain, in the fishing boat, at Mary's home, and in Simon's banqueting hall, as well as on Calvary. We can not picture to ourselves a single sphere of daily life—business, domestic, social—but the sacrament says to us, "Remember Christ there." From the shop and from the assembly, from the family and from the judgment hall, His voice may be heard—"Follow thou me!" But we do so often forget Him in all these; we are so often over-ambitious and careworn and restless; so often rebellious in our sorrows, obstinate in our doubts, neglectful of the little things which make up so large a share of life, desponding under our cares, impatient under our burdens: is it not well if

Christ reminds us at this table of how He bore His burdens, and of how He will teach and help us to bear ours? Shall we rightly discern Him if we do not see Him in this aspect? Moreover, shall we show that we rightly discern Him, if we do not go down from this feast with a clearer sense of duty, a stronger pressure of obligation, a lamp of Christian example freshly trimmed, to shine in the places and among the men that know us best? Surely not. The sacrament calls forth no faith which is not attended with works; reveals to us no atoning power and work of Christ of which the legitimate and inevitable issue is not holy character.

III. The sacrament sets forth Christ, not only living and dying, but risen, ascended, glorified, and interceding for us. In discerning Him thus, we are comforted by the knowledge that we do not commemorate a dead Christ, but a Saviour who lives in heaven to carry on the work begun for us on earth: and in the sacrament, as in fact, this truth links itself inseparably with the truth of

atonement, completing and effectuating it. No man can steadfastly live in Christ as a forgiven man and disbelieve the resurrection of Christ, because His death for sin carries the resurrection with it as a logical necessity. An atonement made by one who could not rise from the dead, who could not put the last enemy under his feet, would be no atonement at all. And this is Paul's argument in the fifteenth chapter of first Corinthians: "Now if Christ be preached that He rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen. And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ—who have died in faith in an atoning Saviour—are perished" (vv. 12–18). Oh, miserable lot! To have laid the burden of our sins on that sacrifice, only to find that, after all, it was but a mere man that died; that the grave still holds

Him fast ; that His flesh *has* seen corruption, and that the sweet story of the garden with its emptied sepulchre is but a beautiful fiction ! We may give up the struggle with sin ; we shall earn its wages—death—just the same. Let sin have its way. Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die (1 Cor. xv. 32).

But not if Christ be risen. Then that death for our sins holds good ; then we are redeemed men ; then we are justified by faith in His blood ; for He "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Rom. iv. 25); and "whom He justified, them He also glorified" (Rom. viii. 30); and "He ever liveth to make intercession for us" (Heb. vii. 25). Discerning the Lord's glorified body in the sacrament, we are satisfied that He was more than our pattern ; that His death meant more than the mere end of His earthly career. We learn that meaning as faith parts the veil of the heavenly sanctuary and shows us the interceding Christ, compassed with

the incense of ever-rising prayer, and stretching forth His pierced hands at the cry of every repentant sinner, and at the moan of every sufferer. He is our "great High-Priest, touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (Heb. iv. 15). And so discerning Him, we carry from the communion-table a sense of the sympathy of heaven. We are not left here to struggle alone. There is a heart beating for us on God's own throne. Our daily life on its hard, bitter, lonely side, is linked to heaven and to the Christ whose presence makes heaven. And once more, discerning Him thus, our life here becomes filled with promise. We no longer look only backward to the cross, and to the years of Christ's earthly life, but the height to which we climb on these festival days, looks heavenward as well as earthward. He who thus discerns the Lord glorified is cheered, not only by sympathy in to-day's sorrows and struggles, but by promise of rest hereafter. Christ has been once on the earth, but ere He left He

said to His disciples: "I will come again and receive you unto myself" (John xiv. 3); and when He bids us do this in remembrance of Him, it is saying to us in effect that this promise is ours; and faith may hear Him say ere we turn back to life's whirl again: "Until the day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matt. xxvi. 29).

Thus we have seen that discerning the Lord's body implies discerning and receiving Christ crucified and atoning as an object of saving faith; Christ living as an object of imitation; Christ risen, ascended, glorified, and interceding, as an object of hope and a fountain of strength. Discerning Christ in the first aspect, tends to make the communicant a penitent and a believer; in the second, to develop in him holy character; in the third, to cheer and comfort him with heavenly sympathy, and with the promise of divine reward. There is nothing terrible in all this. If this is what it is to discern the Lord's body, surely He who

instituted and guarded this sacrament has only attached to its enjoyment a reasonable and proper condition, and one which need repel no sincere follower and dear child of His.

And now, a few words on the remainder of the text. The failure to discern the Lord's body brings judgment; and what this judgment is, you learn from the thirtieth verse. It is a feeble, sickly, drowsy Christian life—if such a life can be called Christian. "For this cause" (because they profane the sacrament in not discerning the Lord's body), "for this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." The communicant who fails to discern Christ *crucified*; who eats and drinks without seeing in the magnitude of the sacrifice the terrible nature of the sin, goes forth with a weakened sense of sin, which is always an element of weakness in character, and with love unkindled by the most stupendous exhibition of love ever given to men or to angels. The man who fails to

see the *living* Christ in the sacrament, goes away without the highest stimulus to fidelity and patience and labor. He will be a sickly Christian who does not keep the image of the faithful, patient, duty-loving Saviour constantly in his heart. He loses much when he misses the impression of that life which the sacrament gives. And the man who fails to discern *the risen and glorified* Christ in the sacrament, goes away without a rekindling of his hope of heaven; and his life will be the more sickly and drowsy, as that hope shall fade out. He will be conquered by his sorrows in proportion as he shall be without the sense of heavenly sympathy sustaining, and heavenly comfort strengthening him. Wherever, in short, there shall be such unworthy eating and drinking, such habitual partaking of the Lord's Supper without discerning the Lord's body, there will be a sickly theology, a weak sense of obligation, an inert, drowsy religious life, devoid at once of enthusiasm and of power.

Alas, that it should be true! there are

too many of these living monuments of judgment in the Church of Christ.

How shall this judgment be avoided? Again we find the answer in the text: "Let a man examine himself, and so" (that is, after proper examination), "let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup." And by this the apostle does not mean an examination into our conditions of feeling, or into the grade of our goodness. Such examination always leaves behind it the harrowing question, "Am I worthy to partake?" And that question has no business in your mind. The examination enjoined by the apostle does not contemplate your personal worthiness at all; for, at best, you will, personally, be unworthy. It concerns merely this point we have been discussing: "Do you rightly discern the Lord's body?" Do you see and accept Christ set forth in the sacrament as your Saviour, your example, your comforter, and your hope? Do you depend for salvation on Him only? Do you truly and heartily

repent of sin? Are you trying to be like Him in your life? Do you draw the daily inspiration of your life from Him? Do you look to Him for your final rest and reward? These are plain questions. They require no morbid mental analysis. If you can say "yes" to them, you may come and eat and drink with joy.

I repeat it, the question of your personal worthiness does not enter. Personally, you are not worthy, and never will be. Nay, the sacrament will rather emphasize this personal unworthiness; but it will overshadow it with another and a greater fact—the perfect worthiness of your Lord, freely offered to cover your unworthiness. And in the light of this truth you can now see that your personal unworthiness, so far from being the cause of your staying from Christ's table, is the best reason why you should come and cast your unworthy self on Him. This is the lesson of the Lord's Supper — Christ's love for the unworthy;

Christ's death for the unworthy; Christ's prevailing intercession for the unworthy. Has not the reproach of the Pharisees become one of the sweetest of all messages to the world—"This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them"? (Luke xv. 2) You have examined yourself, and found yourself unworthy. That is just as Christ would have it. Any other result would convict you of fearful self-deception. Not that Christ would have you imperfect, but that, being so, He would have you realize it. Now, all that He asks is, that you desire, and discern and accept Him as the One ready to save you to the uttermost, and to cover your unworthiness with His perfect righteousness. And therefore, this is the place for a penitent, trusting, obedient heart. For such the banqueting house is open, and love's banner waves its glad invitation. Come, then. Look not at yourself but look to see the Lord's body. The blessing you want is here. Grieve not the Lord by rejecting His invitation. It

would be sad indeed, if, like Thomas, you should miss the sight of His face by staying away, miss some strong confirmation of your faith, miss the tenderly whispered words, "Peace be unto you."

By Miss HAVERGAL.

The Royal Invitation; or, Daily Thoughts on Coming to Christ. Loyal Responses; or, Daily Melodies for the King's Minstrels. 18mo. Cloth, red edges, 85cts.

Life Mosaic; The Ministry of Song, and Our Work and Our Blessings. In one vol., with twelve colored illustrations of Alpine Flowers and Swiss Mountain and Lake Scenery, from drawings by the Baroness Helga Von Cramm. 4to. **Cloth, gilt. $4.00.**

Morning Bells; or, Waking Thoughts for the Little Ones. Little Pillows; or, Good-Night Thoughts for the **Little Ones. In one vol. 32mo. Cloth. * * ***

Royal Commandments; or, Morning Thoughts for the King's Servants. Royal Bounty; or, Evening Thoughts for the King's Guests. 18mo. Cloth, 85 cents.

"For those who have the excellent habit of reading for a few minutes each day. Something to arm the soul in the morning and rest its weariness at night."

My King; or, Daily Thoughts for the King's Children. 18mo. Cloth, 40 cents.

From the 12th thousandth English edition.

"The beauty and purpose of this little volume are of the very highest, and comfort has an abiding place in every page."

Our Work and Our Blessings; or, Under the **Surface. 24mo. Cloth, gilt, $1.00.**

"A volume of original poems. All are pervaded by a sweet and spiritual tone, and occasionally we come across one strikingly beautiful."

The Ministry of Song. Poems. 18mo. Cloth, **gilt, 75 cents.**

Either or all of the above sent by mail, postage paid, on receipt of the price, by

ANSON D. F. RANDOLPH & COMPANY,

900 *Broadway, Cor. 20th St., New York.*

THE

LIFE OF OUR LORD,

IN THE

Words of the Four Evangelists.

Being the Four Gospels arranged in chronological order, and interwoven to form a continuous narrative. With an Introductory Note by Dr. Wm. M. Taylor.

"The advantages of this collation of Scripture, for occasional reading, are very striking. Bound in thin limp covers, we know of nothing so exactly adapted to the needs of the Christian traveler as this little volume of the very marrow of Sacred Truth. The authorized text is adhered to, and what we count as a further advantage, the associations of a life-time are not violated by the style of letter-press. The matter is printed in double columns, without the disfigurement of notes. At the close of the volume is an Index of Subjects and of Chapters, and a full list of renderings or preferred readings from Tischendorf."—*The Evangelist.*

"It were well if every one had it."—*The Advance.*

"We do not see how anything more perfect in its way could well be produced, and we most cordially commend it."—*Parish Visitor.*

"A book which every Christian would delight to have."—*So. Churchman.*

Square 18mo, cloth, gilt edges, $1.00. May be obtained of the booksellers, or will be sent by mail, post-paid, on receipt of the price by the publishers,

ANSON D. F. RANDOLPH & COMPANY,

900 Broadway, cor. 20th St., New York.

THE

LITTLE SANCTUARY,

AND

OTHER MEDITATIONS.

By ALEXANDER RALEIGH, D.D.

Dr. Wm. M. Taylor, in *The Christian at Work*, says:

"The author is a prince among living English preachers. His style is exquisitely finished, and there is a calm, quiet fulness in its flow."

The Christian Intelligencer.

"One of the most edifying and delightful of practical works. Dr. Raleigh has rare ability, taste, and learning. His style is refined and elegant, and his treatment of experimental subjects is discriminating. A third edition of so good a book indicates its appreciation by cultivated minds, and its assured place among standard devotional books."

"We speak a wide circulation for so good and Christian a book."—*Presbyterian.*

"There is an exquisite flavor and charm in these meditations."—*The Advance.*

"Good from beginning to end."—*The Churchman.*

"Warm and generous in tone."—*The Congregationalist.*

12mo, cloth, price $1.25. May be obtained of the booksellers, or will be sent, post-paid, on receipt of the price by the publishers,

ANSON D. F. RANDOLPH & COMPANY,

900 Broadway, Cor. 20th St., New York.

THE RIBBON BOUND BOOKS

Are daintily printed with colored border line, and tied together with ribbon, in a card cover.

SONGS IN THE NIGHT. By Dr. Wm. M. Taylor. 40 cents.
"*A tender and lovely little volume that will bring brightness into many a home.*"

TWELVE THINGS THAT WE KNOW. 35 cents.
"*A collection of texts in which the emphasis is on the word* KNOW. *Much that is precious in a little space.*"

THE TABLE OF PLENTY. Compiled by the author of "Twelve Things that we Know." 75 cents.
"*A collection of Scripture Texts, grouping together in distinct chapters, the* "ALLS" *concerning God the Father, Christ the Son, the Precepts, Promises, etc. Nothing of the kind could be better.*"

YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN; Happy Homes—How to Make Them. By Dr. John Hall. 35 cents.
"*An unaffected, practical, and wise address on home training, worthy of the widest circulation.*"

BREATHINGS OF THE SOUL. By the Rev. P. B. Power. Square 24mo, 50 cents.
"*A little manual of devotion, with hints and suggestions for those who may have found difficulties in prayer.*"

ANGEL VOICES; OR, WORDS OF COUNSEL FOR OVERCOMING THE WORLD. 75 cents.
"*A collection of poetry and prose from many sources, of words of comfort and counsel, not only for the tried and troubled, but for all classes of readers.*"

Either or all of the above sent by mail, post-paid, on receipt of the price, by the publishers.

ANSON D. F. RANDOLPH & COMPANY,
900 *Broadway, Cor 20th St., New York.*

HINTS ON

BIBLE READINGS,

WITH A

COLLECTION OF READINGS FROM VARIOUS SOURCES.

BY THE REV. JOHN C. HILL.

12mo, CLOTH, - - - - - - - $1.00.

" PAPER, - - - - - - - 50 cents.

"A volume in which the author suggests the plans and methods of typical Bible Study, and gives a number of examples, selected from studies which have been prepared and used by ministers in the regular course of their work."—*The Interior.*

"The work is well done. We have found great help in the way of suggestions and direction in the book, and heartily and confidently commend it."—*Vermont Chronicle.*

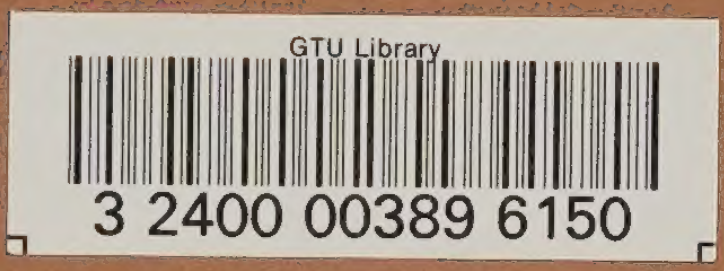
"Aims chiefly to give suggestive material that can be wrought out in the pulpit or prayer meeting."—*The Advance.*

May be obtained of the booksellers, or will be sent, post-paid, on receipt of price by the publishers,

ANSON D. F. RANDOLPH & COMPANY,

900 Broadway, Cor. 20th St., New York.

DATE DUE



GTU Library
2400 Ridge Road
Berkeley, CA 94709
For renewals call (510) 649-2500

All items are subject to recall.